

ANCIENT WORLD AND ITS PEOPLE

Nisith R. Ray



ORIENT LONGMAN

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PREFACE

Ancient World and Its People has been written to meet the special requirements of the new History syllabus for Class VI, framed by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in 1979. The book aims to meet the main objectives of teaching History as specified by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, namely:

- (i) to study the past to understand how the contemporary world is related to the past;
- (ii) to generate awareness of the diversity of human factors behind social evolution without placing disproportionate emphasis on region, community or section;
- (iii) to disabuse the student of the notions of racism, communalism, militant nationalism, regional or cultural chauvinism;
- (iv) regarding Indian History, in particular, to equip the student with an unbiased and scientific outlook regarding the past; giving an idea of the varied geographical, ethnic or regional factors woven into Indian History which forms an integral part of human History;
- (v) to make students realize that outmoded traditions were changed and new norms were established in the course of human civilisation which is a common heritage of man and to which all people—including Indians—have contributed.

Meant for Class VI, this book covers a span

from man's earliest period to A. D. 500. Beginning with a discussion on the purpose and meaning of History, the author then discusses the story of early man as he lived and worked through the Stone Age to the development of the early civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley and China. He then focusses on the Iron Age world of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Iran and of the Jews, and finally introduces the student to the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome, China and India.

To tell the young the story of so many centuries in such short space imposes a heavy responsibility on the author. Timelines, facts and statistics are not enough. If possible, the dry bones of history must be clothed in flesh and resurrected. However imperfectly, within the bounds of the given syllabus, the author has attempted to do this.

Calcutta
December, 1979

NISITH R. RAY

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CHAPTER 1

THE STORY OF THE OLD WORLD HOW IT BEGAN

1. Why should we read history? It is a big question mark. What has history to offer us?

The word 'History' is derived from Latin *historia* which means knowing. It gives us knowledge of the past. Are not we interested in knowing the past? We are a part of the present. But we see people around us; we read about events taking place from day to day. But we want to know more than the present holds out. We are eager to know our past. For the past alone can tell us how and when we came to this life on earth. And how we fared since the day when the first man appeared on the earth. The story is long. It covers millions of years. But it is a story full of interest and lessons for us.

Take the example of your own family. You love your family, but you also want to know about the days when your parents were of the same age as you are. Your interest does not cease there. You would also like to know about your grand-parents, great grand-parents, great-great-grand-parents and so on. Thus in looking back you would reach a point when man first appeared on the earth. Even then all your questions are not over. You would then like to know how old is the earth itself. What were the first living things on the earth? Was man the first to appear on the earth? How did the early man live? What did he look like? What did he live on? These are some of the questions

to which you would like to have answers. History alone can give you the answers to these questions. It tells you not only about your family, but about mankind. It unfolds before you the epic story of Man's ascent from the day the first man appeared on the earth to the present times.

2. How then do we know about the early man? He lived millions of years before our times. The art of writing was unknown in those old days. No books could then be written. Nor has the early man left to us any traces of the objects he might have used. Yet it is possible to know about him and his age, at least in broad outlines. We have come across in the deepest layers of earth broken skeletons or bones. Learned scientists, who make a special study of man, are of the opinion that some of these bones are part of the human body. They have set the pieces of bones together so that we may have a clear idea of how he looked. The early man was a small creature. His head as well as other parts of his body were covered with hair. His forehead was low, but his jaw was strong. He wore no clothes. He lived on raw flesh or leaves and roots of plants. In other words, he lived in the same manner in which other animals used to live.

Then, a little above the deepest layer of earth were found other less old relics. These were human skulls, skeletons and weapons made of rough stone. These were followed by other discoveries. These mostly consisted of arms and utensils made of smooth, chiselled stones. From further up the surface were collected still other relics. These were made of metals—arms, armours, cups, pots, vases, jewellerys, ruins of houses etc. Still later we come across coins and written records and pictures drawn on walls, clay tablets, and papyrus.

These show that mankind was constantly on the move towards a better and more civilised life. At a much later date we come across books. But for the ages before books were written, skeletons, skulls, weapons and utensils made of rough-hewn stone, chiselled and polished stones, vases and potteries besides metal jewellerys, written symbols and pictures on clay-tablets or walls are the main sources for our knowledge about our remote ancestors. They were early or the primitive men, the men of the old and new stone ages and men belonging to the age of the metals. It is a long story no doubt, but one is sure to find it interesting.

EXERCISES

1. Answer the following:

- (a) How is the word 'History' derived?
- (b) Why is it said that the early man was a small animal?
- (c) What are the sources that tell us about the Early Man and his environs?

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF THE EARLY MAN IN
THE STONE AGES

1. The early man was very different from Man today. To all appearances he was a little ugly animal. He lived and acted nearly in the same way as the animals around him used to live and act. Even then he had two basic advantages over the animals. He had a brain cell much bigger than could be found in an animal. He could think and foresee much more quickly than an animal. His other advantage was his two hands. He could use them more freely and fully than the animals could do. He had not to crawl on all four like the animals. He stood and walked erect. That marked him out from other animate beings.

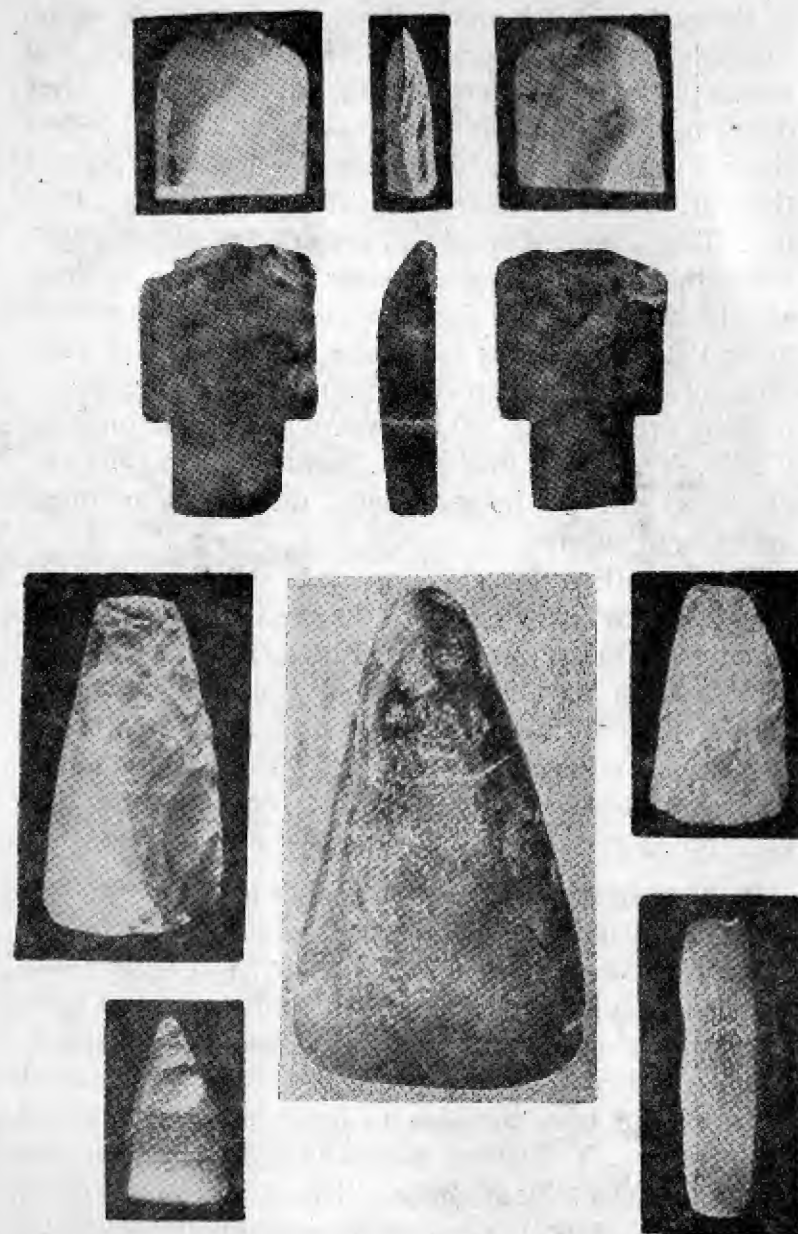
True, man was not the earliest living being on the earth. There were other living organs much older than men—plants, jelly fishes, fishes, frogs and reptiles. But man who came later proved himself superior to the others.

The story of mankind begins with the early man about whom we have spoken earlier. He was, as we have seen, more an animal than a man. Even then his brain and his hands gave him advantages over other animals. But he did not know skills. He did not know how to build a house. He wore no clothes. He lived on roots of plants, fruits and raw meat. But the situation changed after millions of years. The descendants

of the early man who lived down the years were not so helpless as their ancestors. They found ways and means to save themselves from extreme cold. They drove out the animals from the caves and began to live there. Even then something more was needed to protect them from the cold and ice. Then they saw a forest fire. They also saw sparks of fire coming out of rocks when the hoofs of running deer struck them. These set them thinking till they discovered fire. The earliest example of men using fire is the **Peking man**. Finds, dug out of the earth, prove that men learnt the art of making fire at least 300,000 years before the birth of Christ. The use of fire was a great event in the story of mankind. It helped them, unlike many other animals, to survive.

Then another miracle happened. One day a dead fowl dropped in the midst of the fire. It was roasted when it was taken out; it tasted better. Till then man had lived on raw and uncooked roots and leaves of plants, fish or meat. He was only a food-gatherer. Even then, when he could not produce the food, he was at least able to cook the food that he had gathered.

2. Men living in the age after that of the early man were still primitive. The age in which they lived is known as the *Old Stone Age*. They lived better lives than their ancestors. They had learnt to use guttural words and express their feelings. They lived in places which sheltered them against the cold. They used the barks of trees or skins of dead animals to cover their bodies. They used pieces of stones for cutting wood and hunting animals. The stones were rough and heavy. But they served as weapons to fight back their enemies.



Relics of the Old and New Stone Ages.

3. Thousands of years rolled by before we reach the next age. This is known as the *New Stone Age*. It is difficult to say when it precisely began. But 8000 B.C. is a possible date for the story of the New Stone Age. Men of this age knew better ways of living than those of the Old Stone Age. They made weapons and potteries of stones and bones. These were finer and more polished. Some of them bore marks of decoration. The weapons could be thrown from greater distance and with lesser risk. Some of these looked like tools of the present day like axe, knife, drill, saw and chisel.

4. What was more remarkable about the neolithic people was that they had learnt to plant seeds and grow food. Thus they were no longer food-gatherers. They had become food-growers. This led to an important change in the mode of their living. Before the discovery of the art of cultivation, they used to wander from place to place in search of food. Now that they could grow food, they began to live at fixed places. They saw that the land near a river was fertile. They settled there, sowed seeds, watered the plants as they grew and collected them when they bore fruit. This needed a long gap of time. The need to live in a fixed place led them to build houses to live in. These were made of wood and bamboos. Houses were built mostly at the bottom of lakes where the water was not more than ten feet deep. Such houses rested on logs of twenty feet with the sharpened ends driven inside the soil. The dwellings were connected with the shore by a bridge. The bridge or a part of it was removed at night for reasons of safety. A dwelling house often had a trap-door attached to it. Through this door the

dweller would catch fish with the aid of a sharpened hook.



A reconstructed view of a Neolithic lake village, built on piles.

The neolithic people were less afraid of animals than their fore-fathers. They hunted and drove away the fierce animals. But they also made good use of animals for domestic purposes. Among the number of animals tamed by them were cows, horses, asses, sheep, goats, pigs and dogs. The main occupations of the people of this age were agriculture and hunting.

For many years the primitive men used pieces of stone to make weapons. Later they made weapons with the aid of bones. But they needed more things than weapons. For example, they needed pots, jugs, dishes and other utensils. They learnt to make these from clay. These were made mostly by the women. They pressed their hands against lumps of clay and gave them the desired shapes. Then was discovered the potter's wheel. The wheel was a simple device.

It was a round piece of board set on a revolving spindle. A wheel was generally worked by the men-folk. It needed special skill to give the clay-lump a circular or round shape. It was then baked in the sun or with fire. This made the pots hard and water-proof. We do not know for certain who discovered the potter's art. It was in use both in Egypt and in China in the neolithic age. The art of pottery is yet another step in man's march to civilisation.

The neolithic people made progress in other ways too. The people in the earlier age covered their bodies with barks, leaves or animal-skin. Their successors in the new stone age learnt to weave natural fibres like wool and flax, and later cotton and silk, into threads and to make cloths out of them. This assured for them a better and more comfortable mode of living.

We have written about the lake-dwellings of the neolithic men. But houses were also built on land, specially on sites near cultivation plots. These houses were made of various materials—mud, reeds, and stones. Naturally the stone houses offered better means of defence and were the fore-runners of castles and forts of later times.

The discovery of agriculture, we have seen, led men to give up their wandering habits. Instead, they began to live in groups at one or other fixed place. They found that it was safer and more profitable to live together than to live in isolation. Thus communities began to take shape. Slowly families grew up. The parent or the senior member of the family, as head of the family, gained power and importance.

At the beginning men carried their burdens themselves. But as they learnt to tame animals, they

used some of the animals as beasts of burden like oxen, buffalo and asses. Rafts made of bamboo reeds or timber were the chief mode of transport by water.

From what we have said it is clear that men had changed in their bodily appearance from age to age. But the change was more than physical. The mind of man also changed. He was improved by his environs and by Nature. His feelings were of a mixed nature—of awe and love. He came to believe in magic and miracle. He felt vaguely that there was some power or force working in nature which could not be seen but felt. He knew he was superior to other animals, but he felt powerless against nature. He thought it was safer to avoid doing anything that would displease the unknown powers. He tried sometimes to depict these unknown powers through painting. He also wanted to paint the animals he fought and killed. Some of these paintings are found in half-dark caves of Spain and France. The drawings were so well done that the painted objects look as if they are alive.

The neolithic man also learnt to use words to express his feelings. His predecessor, the primitive man of the earlier ages, could voice only some guttural sounds to express his joy, sorrow or fear. But his successor in the new stone age learnt to use specific words to communicate his feelings to fellow-men.

The people of this age set the highest value to agriculture which gave them food and helped them to live and grow. But they also knew that unless nature favoured them with rainfall in the proper season they could not produce as much as they liked. Hence they learnt to worship the power of nature and conceived a goddess of productivity. This goddess was known

by different names in the different regions of the ancient world.

EXERCISES

1. Give answer to the following:

- (i) Was man the earliest living being on the earth?
- (ii) Why is it said that the Early Man was more an animal than a man?

2. (a) When was fire first made by men?

(b) Why was the use of fire a great event?

3. Name (a) some of the living organs which are older than man and (b) some of the tools and weapons of the Old Stone Age.

4. Draw a picture of a dwelling house of the New Stone Age.

5. Fill in the blanks:

(a) ——— B.C. was a possible date at which the story of the New Stone Age may be said to have begun.

(b) They were no longer food-gatherers. They had become———

(c) ——— was a round piece of board set on a revolving spindle.

6. Arrange in proper order the periods jumbled together : (a) The Metal Age; (b) The Old Stone Age; (c) The New Stone Age.

7. Name some of the animals domesticated by the New Stone Age men.

8. Write in 3 sentences of your own how the neolithic people lived better lives than those of the Old Stone Age.

CHAPTER III

IN THE AGE OF METALS

We have traced the progress of mankind through the Old and New Stone Ages. But then came a time when men learnt the use of metal. These were copper, tin and a mixed metal, composed of the two and known as bronze. The use of metal was yet another great step towards civilised life.

1. The most important feature of the new age was the growth of towns as distinct from villages. As long as men had lived on hunting and agriculture, they had preferred to live near forests and rivers. But as they learnt other crafts, they found it was to their advantage to live closer together in areas where they could easily obtain means of production, from where products could be sent out with greater ease and where they felt safe. These new centres with marts and workshops turned out to be towns.

2. In course of time production grew in volume. Sometimes a particular commodity was produced more than was needed for the people of a particular locality. There were also areas where the produce fell short of the quantity needed. Thus there grew the need of carrying the surplus commodity to areas where there was scarcity. Even within the communities, settled in a particular area, the need for exchange of commodity was felt. Money was not then thought of. The weavers needed food just as the cultivators needed clothes. In the same way jewellers needed potteries and the potters were in need of ornamentation. Thus

a case for the exchange of commodities and artisans grew up. This promoted the growth of commerce. Thus to hunters, agriculturists and producers of articles were added the class of dealers in commerce.

3. Side by side with the growth of new occupations there arose new social divisions, namely tribes. The tribes grew out of groups of families living together. Each tribe had its own leader. Just as each family had its own head. But gradually the tribes became involved in rivalries with one another, for one reason or other. This often led to conflict among several tribes. Finally the tribal chief who won the battle against rival tribes would bring the defeated tribes under his authority. Thus mankind headed towards a process which in the end led to the formation of a state. It was a long and slow process. It passed through several phases—the family, the clan or the tribe and finally, the state.

4. We would be wrong if we supposed that people all over the world became civilised at the same time. One reason is that the whole world, as we know it today, was not peopled in the good old days. Only in some parts of the world people lived then. Even then they were not all civilised. Civilisation was, in fact, limited to certain areas. The one thing that was common among these centres of early civilisation was that these were situated in the river valleys. One such centre was Mesopotamia. It lay on the valley formed by two rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates. Another centre, namely, Egypt, belonged to the Nile Valley. Similarly, the earliest known centre of civilisation in India flourished along the valley of the Indus. The civilisation of China too had its origin in the region watered by the Hwang-Ho and the Yangste-Kiang.

Was it an accident that civilisation arose in areas through which mighty rivers ran? No. There was a close relation between the two. The land near a river was fertile. It was safer too. It also enabled people living near it to go on voyages and collect articles they needed. People living in these areas had to struggle much less for their living than the settlers in areas far removed from the rivers. They had more leisure. This enabled them to see and think ahead of others and to cultivate the arts of civilised life.

EXERCISES

1. Name the metals used by the men of the copper age.
2. How was a town different from a village?
3. (a) Arrange in order of time the growth of (i) Tribes; (ii) Families; (iii) Clans and (iv) State.
(b) Give 3 reasons why civilisation flourished along river valleys.

CHAPTER IV

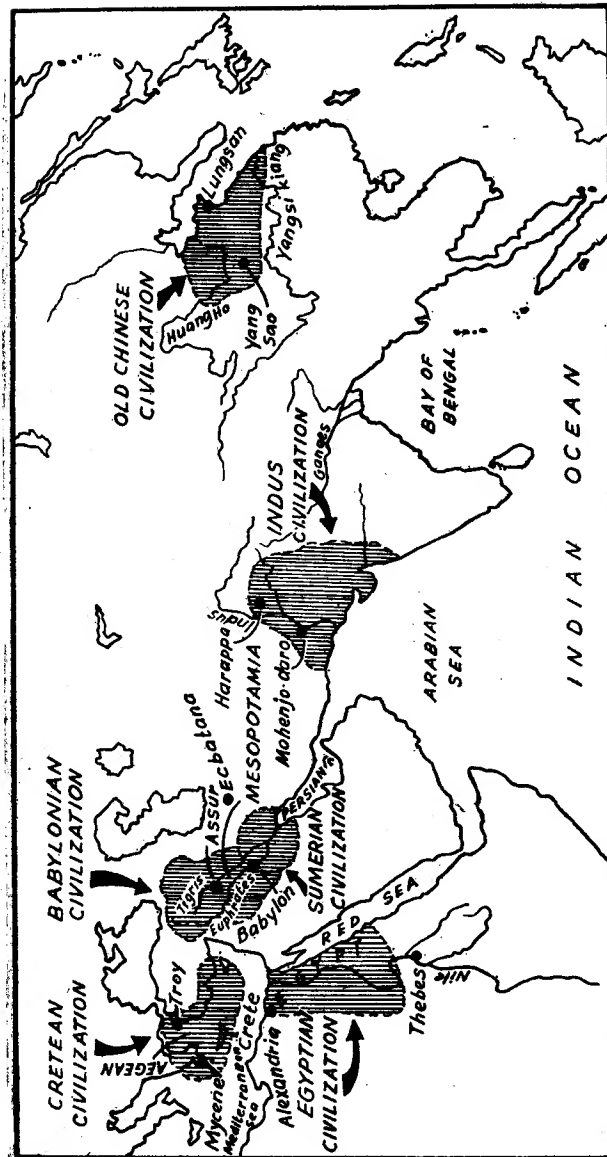
THE SEATS OF EARLY CIVILISATION

(i) Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia is the ancient name of Iraq of today. Literally, the word means a strip of land between any two rivers. Specifically, it was applied to the land between the two rivers—Tigris and the Euphrates. This site was one of the cradles of human civilisation. It is possible to assign its earliest history to a period of 4000 years before the birth of Christ.

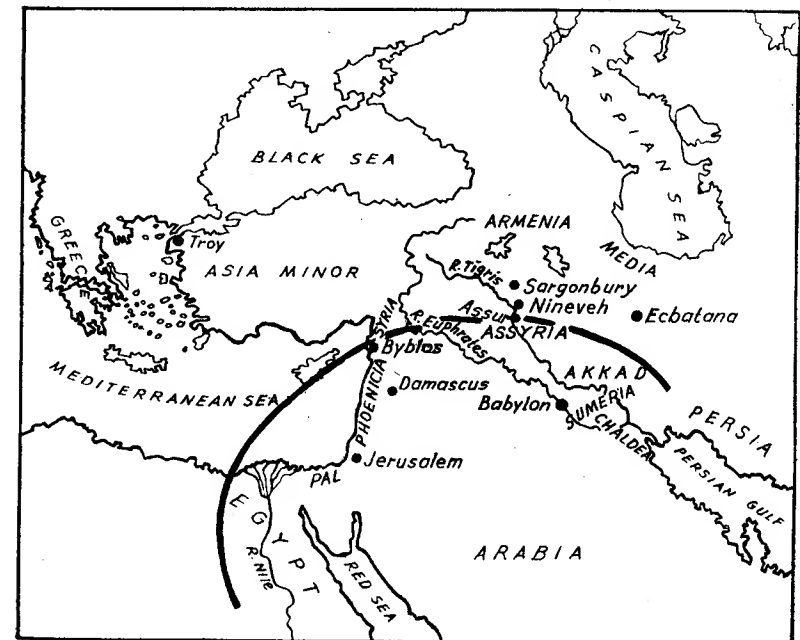
1. Speaking of Mesopotamia it is not correct to say that its extent was same as that of Iraq. The climate and the river courses have changed in course of years and the geography of ancient Mesopotamia was different from that of Iraq of today. Its most striking feature was that it was an exceptionally fertile strip of land situated between the mountains of Armenia in the north and the deserts on the south. It was natural that both the mountain-folks and the inhabitants of the desert area should have cast covetous looks on the fertile valley. There were thus frequent conflicts between the two rival groups over the possession of Mesopotamia. In the first phase of the struggle the mountain-folks won over the nomads of the desert. They are known as the Sumerians. They established their supremacy in Mesopotamia about 4000 B.C.

2. The Sumerians were a sturdy race. They were good warriors. But it must not be supposed that fighting was their only occupation. A large section of them lived on agriculture. The Sumerian cultivators



Map showing locations of early civilisations.

at first used rough weapons, like the spades of later times, for dressing their land. This made slow progress. Later they discovered the plough. This enabled them to undertake the cultivation of bigger plots of land with greater ease. Every year when the rivers were flooded, they left alluvial soil on both the banks and vast areas along which the flood water moved. This made these areas fertile after the floods had receded. But the floods were also a source of evil. They washed away houses and villages. Hence the Sumerians took care to build their houses on high levels of ground. They also guarded against failures of rains which would make their lands dry. They dug canals and thus stored water. The main crops cultivated by them were rice, wheat and barley.



Mesopotamia.

Floods are known to be a great scourge even today. Hence barrages, dams and embankments are constructed so that floods can be controlled. These need a great deal of engineering skill and technical knowledge. Such knowledge or skill was not available in those days. The Sumerians, nevertheless, took steps to hold flood-water through canals and dykes.

Fighting and cultivation were not the only occupations of the Sumerians. A number of people earned their livelihood as hunters. Then with the use of metals other occupations arose like those of artisans and craftsmen, potters, weavers, jewellers, carpenters and others. There were also labourers who had no lands of their own and worked on hire on the fields of others to whom they belonged.

3. The Sumerians were great builders. In the older days when they had lived in the mountainous northern area they had built their temples on the top of the hills. Later when they came to occupy the plains of Mesopotamia they did not give up their old practice and continued to build their temples and houses on higher grounds. They built high mounds on which their towers and temples stood. They needed towers so that they could keep watch against the nomads of the deserts and ensure their own safety. The towers were imposing and lofty structures. The Sumerians did not know how to build stairs. They built sloping galleries around the towers, leading from one storey to another. Ruins of these towers survive in later times. The Hebrews described them as towers of Babel.

The temples too were built on artificial hill tops. Some of them were massive structures measuring over 245 feet by 100 feet. The altar was at top, surrounded

by narrow chambers. Landed properties were attached to each temple so that it would be maintained with the income derived from such properties. The priests looked after the temple property. They enjoyed great powers and were held in respect. The temples were built with clay baked in the sun or in fire. They were often decorated with wall paintings of excellent colour. Sometimes statements of receipts and expenditures of temple administration were written in mysterious signs on the temple walls. The temple had an elaborate staff attached to it. Apart from priests it consisted of artisans, tax-gatherers, free and bonded labourers. A Mesopotamian temple has been described as a sort of 'divine household'.

The Sumerians were also good craftsmen. They showed remarkable skill in stone-cutting and in metal work. There is evidence that by 3000 B. C. both stones and copper or bronze were in extensive use in Mesopotamia. The best stones were imported from Oman on the Persian Gulf, lapis-lazuli from Badakshan in North-eastern Afghanistan and mother-of-pearl from the Persian Gulf. Vast quantities of copper came from Oman, and the eastern mountains, tin from eastern Iran and Syria and silver and lead from the Taurus mountains. Thus between Mesopotamia and the countries of Western Asia, and even Europe there existed close commercial contact. Trade was conducted along land and water routes. The journeys were risky and arduous. Yet caravans defied the



A Sumerian Priest.

dangers incidental to crossing swamps, deserts and mountain gorges till they reached their destination. The route along the water was no less dangerous. It lay across tortuous rivers, marshes and shoals, besides open and high waters. There were also hostile tribes either to be won over by bribes or overcome by force. A Mesopotamian caravan was thus a big and a brave venture.

4. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the ancient people of Mesopotamia is their peculiar form of writing. The striking feature of their script is that it was wedge-shaped. This was known as Cuneiform writing



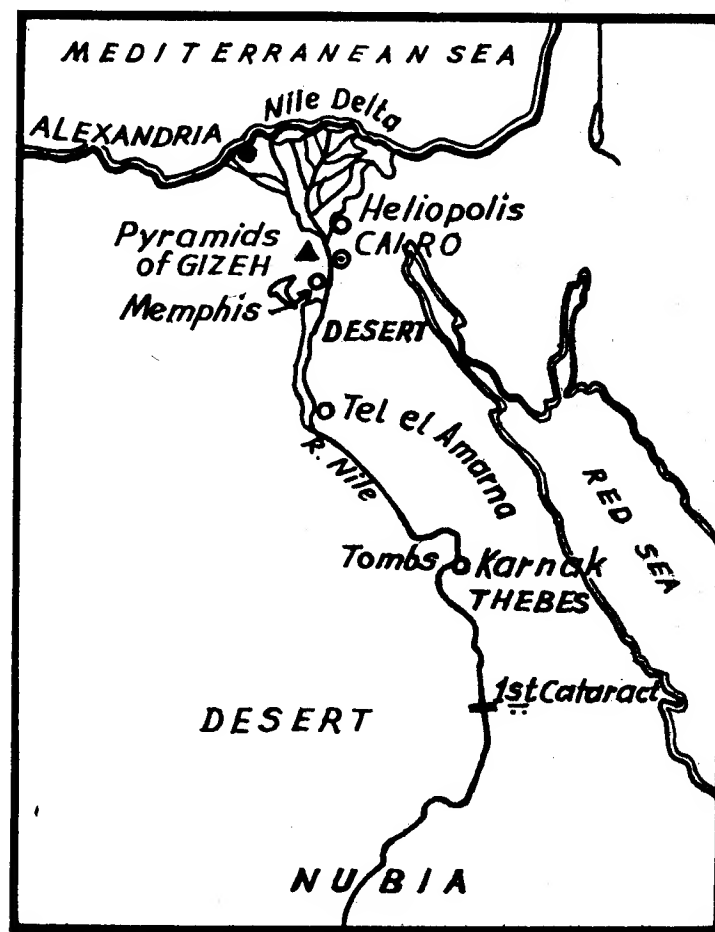
Cuneiform writing.

from the Latin *cuneus* which means a wedge. The letters are also described as nail writings. They appeared on clay later baked in the sun or fire. The samples of cuneiform writing were first discovered in the closing years of the 18th century. These were studied with great care and diligence by a German scholar, Grotefend and a British Officer, Henry Rawlinson. Unlike the Egyptians, the Sumerians did not rely on pictures; instead they chose a series of V-shaped figures to express their ideas. These figures, in the origin, might have had something to do with a partial picture but very soon the figure was used, not as a sign of a picture, but as a symbol of idea. At first the Sumerians used no less than 2000 signs. Gradually they simplified the mode and learnt to manage with 600 signs only. Much labour was

needed to adopt the art of writing. The priests who mastered the art taught it to trainees. Such training schools were located near the temples.

(ii) Egypt

1. Egypt, like Mesopotamia, was yet another cradle of human civilisation. Like Mesopotamia, Egypt,



Egypt—Nile Valley.

situated in North Eastern Africa, was skirted by vast stretches of sand, but it was in itself a vast green luxuriant patch. The exceptional fertility of the soil is the gift of the river, Nile. The overflow of the Nile and the rich sediment from the Abyssinian highlands have given rise to the delta known as Egypt. The delta is a rich level land which divides itself into two parts. The upper valley is narrower than the lower part of the delta. The coastline extends to over 600 miles along the Mediterranean and to about twice that length along the Red Sea. The air is dry. This has enabled old relics to survive.

The Nile overflowed at least once in every year flooding its banks. As the high tide receded, alluvial soil was left behind. This made the land extremely fertile. But as there was scorching heat the soil became dry. It was therefore necessary to store water. This was done by digging canals and building reservoirs. It helped the soil to remain fertile throughout the year.

2. The older inhabitants of Egypt were a people of the Caucasian—a white-race. There were also Negroes who had arrived in fairly large numbers from several parts of Central Africa.

The primitive people in Egypt lived by hunting. Later they learnt the art of cultivation. They gave up the old habit of wandering from place to place in search of food and began to settle in fixed areas. They formed themselves into families and then into tribes. Gradually the tribes came together and larger units, known as kingdoms, came into existence. The two leading sections of the early Egyptian society were composed of large land-owners and the priestly classes. In many instances the land-owner and the priest were the same

person. With the growth of kingdoms, the power of the King increased. The Egyptian King, later called the 'Emperor', was known as the 'Pharaoh'. This word, literally means, "The Man who lived in the Big House". The first ruler to have brought the two Kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt under his authority was Menes in about 3400 B. C. He was the founder of the Old Kingdom which lasted for nearly thousand years. The Pharaohs were great warriors. They were believed to possess magical powers.

3. In Egypt the priests were held in great respect. Since food was available in plenty, the early Egyptians did not have to work hard for their livelihood. They had enough leisure. This set them thinking about the powers of nature. They wanted to know where the stars came from. They were keen to know the mysteries of the rivers and valleys. They also desired to know what happened after death and how they could best worship the powerful objects of nature. The only people who could answer their queries were the priests. They were a community of exceptionally learned people. They were the custodians of the sacred texts and of all written records. They were the keepers of the temples and temple-properties. They had the last word on religious matters. So long as the Pharaohs and the priests acted together there were peace and stability. At a later stage there grew up a misunderstanding between the two and the power of the Pharaoh was undermined when the priests withheld their support to royalty.

4. Next in importance to the king and the priest stood the scribe or the writer. The Egyptians were the first people in the world who devised a system of pictorial writing. But the picture related to the sound

of the object the writer wanted to depict. For example, if the writer desired to say that he had seen something, the word 'see' would be depicted, with the picture of

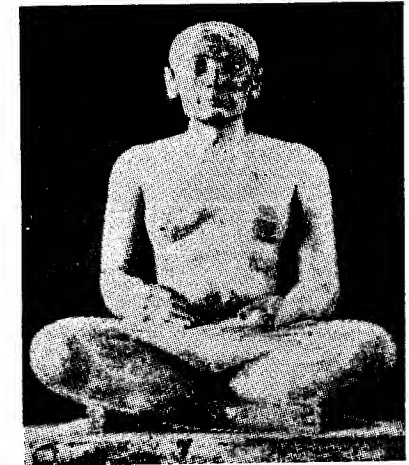


Egyptian writing—Hieroglyphics.

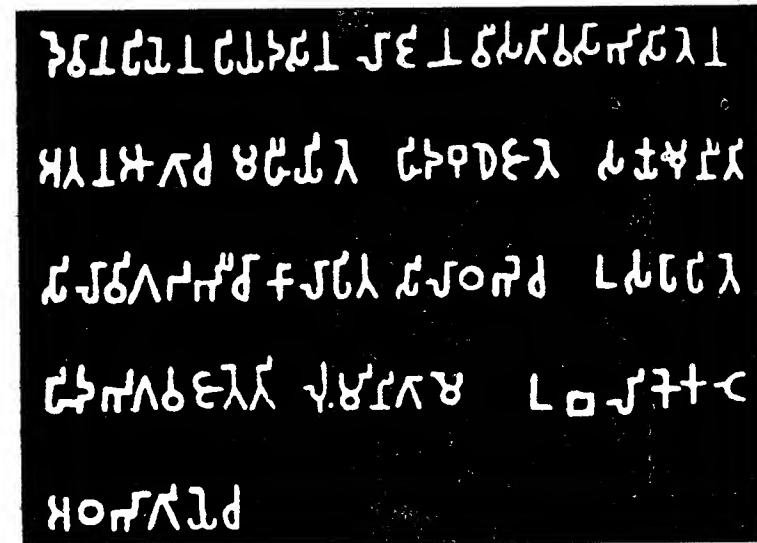
knew anything about their meaning. It was a French professor, Mon. Champollion, who was able to solve the mystery and decipher the writings. These writings are an important source or material on ancient Egyptian history.

the 'sea'. This practice of following the sound was followed by the Egyptian writers. They were known as the scribes and their writing was called 'heriogliphics' or sacred writings. A large number of these writings were engraved on stones, rocks, walls of temples and houses. Even books were written on flattened tissues of reeds known as papyrus. The Egyptians were familiar with this sort of writing at least 4000 years before the birth of Christ. But for hundreds of years after this form of writing had gone out of practice, no one

The Pharaohs and the priests were the richest and most powerful sections of the Egyptian society and state. They owned large estates including marts, quarries, cultivable lands and pastures. They needed a large number of workers to work in the fields and in the mines, just as they required trained fighters to keep away the intruders. They were also in need of officers who could roam about the country collecting taxes due to the king and the priests. Much labour and many labourers were also required for the



An Egyptian Scribe.



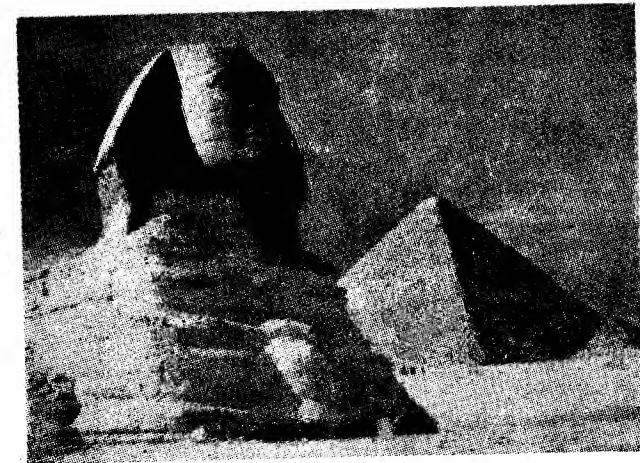
Ancient Indian writing—Brahmi.

construction of temples, forts, royal and priestly residences. The duty of enlisting labourers, both free and bonded, was assigned to a class of officers. Thus with the increase in the power and resources of the royal and priestly classes there grew up a large class of officials, besides warriors.

5. For many centuries the early Egyptians lived on agriculture. The soil was extraordinarily fertile and its produce was sufficient for meeting the needs of the people. But with the discovery and use of metals other sources of income were added. One was trade. The articles produced by the potters, weavers, metal-workers and jewellers were of an excellent quality. The Egyptians found that there was a large demand for these articles in other countries. Thus a large section of the people became traders. They sent their commodities abroad and also obtained materials which were not available in their own country. From about 2700 B.C. the Egyptian traders ventured southward into Nubia and imported ivory, gold, precious woods and gums. They also carried their commodities to the coastal areas of the Red Sea, the peninsula of Sinai, Palestine, Syria, and the islands of Crete and Cyprus. Later a canal was dug connecting the Red Sea with the Nile Delta. It made possible direct voyages of Egyptian vessels to the Red Sea and the coasts of Africa.

The Egyptians were greater builders than the Sumerians about whom we read in the previous lesson. The pyramids were the most outstanding example of their building enterprise. The Egyptian tombs were originally made of bricks. About 3000 B.C. they started using stones as materials for construction work. The tombs made of stone were at first small in size.

But in course of time they grew larger and larger. These were usually found in far-off places like the deserts. The body of the king was laid in a coffin. Valuable jewellery and furniture were interred with



A Pyramid of Egypt.

the dead body. The ancient Egyptians believed that no one could enter the realm of the god Osiris except in body, the soul in their opinion was capable of re-entering the body. Hence they felt it necessary to preserve the body as long as possible even after the soul had departed from it. They thus enlarded the body, covered it with layers of cloth and placed it inside the coffin. Then they took care to make sure that neither wild animals nor robbers could gain access to it. Hence they raised big stone structures over it. With the lapse of years the pyramids grew to be more and more massive. The Great Pyramid of Gizeh, raised over the body of King Khufu (13th century B.C.) was a solid mass composed of 2,300,000 blocks of stone. Each stone weighs two and a half ton. The structure reach-

ed a height of about 500 feet. The Greek historian, Herodotus, tells us that it took a hundred thousand workmen, twenty years to complete the structure.



Egyptian divinities.

The ancient Egyptians believed in the existence of a number of deities. Chief among them was Osiris, the mighty god who was the Ruler of the Living and the Dead. He was the sole judge of the acts of men, according to their merits. It is thus not surprising that persons lesser than the King, like the civilians and the nobles, would often inscribe on walls such proclamations as "Never have I taken a thing belonging to any person" or such sayings as "I gave bread to the hungry; I clothed him.....I never oppressed any one". They also believed that death did not mean the end of everything. Desires lasted even after the

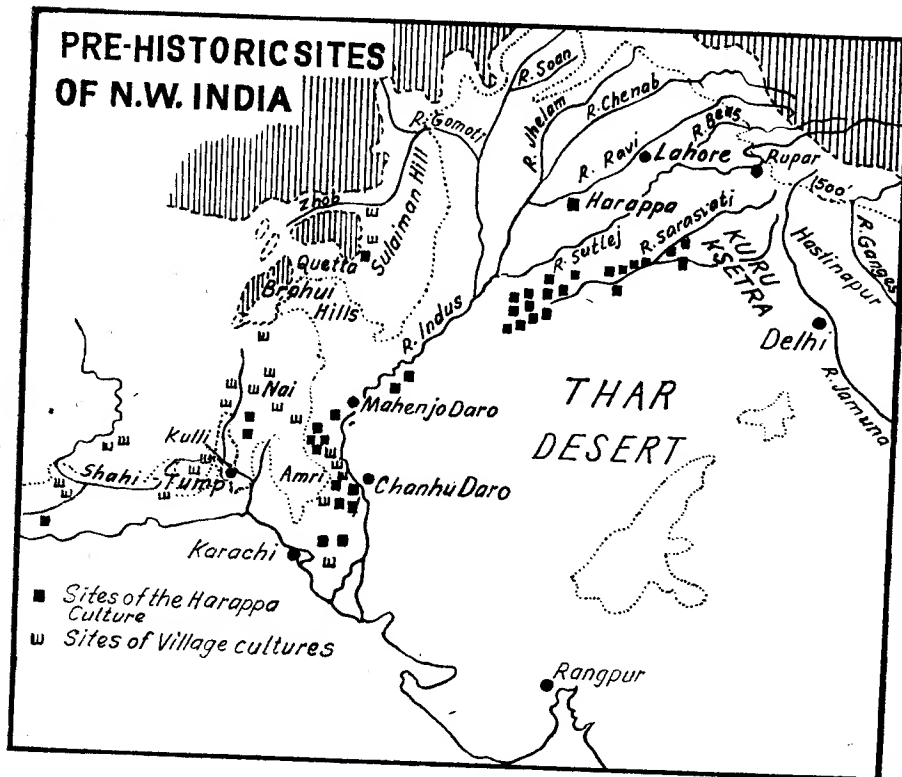
soul had left the body and hence they used to bury with the dead the earthly objects that the dead person had loved while alive.

6. Agriculture, as we have seen, was the main occupation of the Egyptians. But there were other means of livelihood as well. Many adopted the profession of soldiering. Trained fighters were needed to keep away the intruders from the deserts. Large sections engaged themselves as artisans and skilled labourers, like weavers, potters, carpenters, metal-workers and so on. Still others lived by trade. The occupation of the priests and the scribes was looked upon with great respect. It must not be supposed that all labourers were paid. A large percentage of them were bonded labourers or slaves who were forced to render service without being paid for it.

(iii) The Indus Valley

1. The Indus played the same role as the Tigris-Euphrates did in Mesopotamia and the Nile in Egypt. The Indus was verily the life of ancient India and the source of her oldest culture. Some localities in Sind and in the Punjab were found to contain old-looking mounds. The archaeologists thought that below these heaps relics of the age of the Buddha could be found. Their hopes were more than fulfilled. From underneath deep layers of soil in Mohenjodaro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab they discovered relics which were found to be much older than the Buddhist times. But of their antiquity only the geologists could give the answer. In their expert opinion, the particular layer of soil in which these relics were found, was at least 5500 to 5000 years old. A comparison of these finds with the relics discovered in Mesopotamia confirmed

the view of the geologists. This meant that the Indus Valley civilisation was of the same age and standard as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt.



Indus Valley.

It is not to be supposed that Mohenjodaro and Harappa were the only sites of this ancient civilisation. Other sites have since then been unearthed. These are situated in the various parts of North-Western India, the Narmada Valley and in some parts situated in the eastern belt of the country. Thus, though, it is known as the Indus Valley civilisation, it is evident that it spread to lands beyond the Indus. We hope at

some future date we shall be able to tell you precisely about the extent of the ancient civilisation of India dating back to at least 5000 years before our times.

2. The findings that have been unearthed at different sites are of a varied nature. They range from relics of houses, granaries, barracks, streets, drains, wells and baths to figures of men, women, deities, animals, weapons, utensils and toys. A large number of seals have also come to light. There are written texts on these seals. But the script in which these were written is yet not known.

The relics of houses and streets that have been discovered so far show that the people of the Indus Valley lived mostly in towns. They were familiar with nearly all the amenities of modern urban life. The houses they lived in were made of bricks. Some of these houses were of more than one storey. They were provided with windows, doors, stairways and even rainwater pipes. There were broad streets and on both sides of them rows of houses stood. There were public baths. One such bath, known as the Great Bath, has been discovered among the ruins of Mohenjodaro. It was spacious and well-planned. It could be filled with hot or cold water according to the needs of the season. There is also evidence of the existence of a granary. It served as the store-house from where grains were distributed so that there should be no scarcity. The wealthy people lived then, as now, in big and better houses. The poor and the labouring classes dwelt in rows of small houses which looked like the barracks of today.

3. As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, so in the Indus Valley, the bulk of the people lived on agriculture. Wheat and barley were cultivated in large quantities.

These were the main items of food. Among other items were included meat, fish and vegetables. Milk was their favourite drink. Among fruits, dates were in great demand.

Object of daily use were an interesting feature of the discoveries at several sites of the Indus Valley. Among the relics of this category were vases of different sizes and shapes, ornaments made of gold, silver and precious stones, besides knives, needles, combs, razors, mirrors, fish hooks and axes. Fine specimens of weapons and utensils have also been unearthed. These were made of horns, shells, ivory and silver. Examples of beautifully coloured and polished potteries have been also found.



A painted pottery.

4. The Indus Valley people also made much progress as craftsmen. They belonged to an age when copper and bronze were in extensive use. They made weapons, utensils, pottery and ornaments. They showed considerable skill in their production. The number

of people who earned their livelihood as artisans and craftsmen was fairly large. Their skill was acquired through many years of patient practice under expert guidance.

5. The Indus Valley people carried on brisk trade in the commodities, they produced. The seals, which were referred to earlier were, in all probability, tokens or records of commerce. A fair number of objects produced by the skilled artisans and craftsmen of the Indus Valley were sent out to several countries abroad. The sea was the highway of maritime commerce. There are indications that Indian commodities were carried in vessels reaching as far as the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia.

6. Like people living in other ancient centres of human civilisation, the men of the Indus Valley worshipped a number of deities. The chief among them was the mother-goddess. Another deity worshipped by them was a horned figure in meditation surrounded by five animals. He is supposed to have been the original of Siva Pashupati whose worship became common in India at later times. A remarkable feature about the religious life of the Harappa culture is that temples or houses of worship had not then come into existence.



Mohenjodaro deity.

7. The relics discovered at the sites of the Indus

Valley shed some light on the social life of the people. In the days of the Old and New Stone Ages social divisions were not marked. A person with superior bodily strength enjoyed advantages over others who were physically weak. The discovery of metals led to a change. Tin, copper or bronze could be made use of by persons whose resources were larger than those of the ordinary folk. Thus wealth, rather than physical strength, came to determine the social status of men. So long as weapons and articles were made of stone, every one who desired to use or own them could do so. But copper or bronze instruments were costly and were not easily obtained. Thus those who could obtain and make use of them were in a position to dominate others who could not obtain them. The latter were compelled to work under the former.

The divisions in society were determined by occupation. Besides the class of wealthy owners of lands there were traders, artisans, craftsmen and labourers. Priestly classes like those in Mesopotamia and Egypt were unknown in the Indus Valley.

(iv) China

Like Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus Valley, China too was a cradle of human civilisation. Her civilisation was one of the oldest and richest known to man. One of the most primitive human types has been discovered in the lime-stone caves at Choukautien, situated about 200 feet above the Yellow River. The Peking Man is one of the earliest types of man discovered so far.

1. China is not only one of the earliest homes of man; it was also one of the seats of the oldest civilisation. This civilisation had its birth and growth along the

valleys of the Hwang-Ho and Yangste-Kiang. The Hwang-Ho rises from the hill ranges in the north-east and flows to the Gulf of Korea, flowing across a stretch of 2500 miles. It is commonly known as the Yellow River since it carries the burden of yellow-coloured silt from the hills. The silt gathers so rapidly that the bed, at places, is higher than the plains. It is thus too shallow for navigation of large vessels. The Yangste-Kiang is much longer. It covers a length of 3000 miles. Its bed is deeper than that of the Hwang-Ho and heavy vessels can move along its course smoothly. These rivers were natural highways which made it possible for water transport to reach almost every village in the delta lands between them. This access to water was made easier when a canal was dug 2000 years ago connecting the Hwang-Ho with the Yangste-Kiang. These waterways made the valley through which they flowed rich and fertile. The prosperity and civilisation of China were the gift of her rivers.

The earliest account of China and her people is recorded in legends. They date back to thousands of years before the Christian era. Even if these legends are only half-truths, the historical period of China and her civilisation goes back to the days when most of the people led primitive lives in many other parts of the world. Traces of the New Stone Age roughly assigned to 4000 B. C. have been discovered in at least five sites in Honan Province. From about 3000 B. C. people of the Bronze age are known to have occupied the valley of the Yellow River. Its chief city was at Anyang, a site situated few miles from the river, in what later came to be known as Honan. A number of bronze urns and vases of excellent quality have been discovered

from underneath this site. Among other discoveries is a primitive form of Chinese writing scratched on animal bones. The people of this age lived in mud-houses, grew crops of wheat and millet, wove wool and made pottery. They kept pigs, sheep and cattle. They seem to have known the use of carts and chariots. They used cowrie shells in place of money.

2. During the neolithic age the Chinese, like other contemporary people of the ancient world, lived in clans. Gradually these clans united. That led to the growth of kingdoms. The king was looked upon as a divine being. He was the sole source of power, wealth and prosperity.

The life of the Chinese was closely linked with the rivers. The rivers made the lands rich and fertile. They made the people living in the valleys happy and prosperous. But the rivers were also a source of danger. The Hwang-Ho, in particular, was often a source of incalculable misery. It brought on floods which washed away houses, fields, men and animals. Thus, another name of the Yellow River was 'Yellow Peril'. Its bed was anything but low because of its muddy silt. The river bed at places was higher than the flood level. Thus heavy rains often made the water level rise high and submerge vast areas. Many old myths in China recall the terrible losses caused by high tide and the floods. And yet the Chinese knew that, but for the river there would be drought and scarcity. Excess of water, on the other hand, was likely to lead to floods. They were thus left at the mercy of the river. Drought and flood were the two evils with which they had to grapple. At times they felt helpless. An old Chinese proverb says: "It is either drought or it is flood. How do men live then?"

Common Features of Early Civilisations

We have learnt about the cradles of civilisation. Whether it was in Mesopotamia or Egypt, in India or in China, civilisation is found to have sprung up in areas along mighty rivers like the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile, the Indus, the Hwang-Ho and the Yangste-Kiang. It follows that rivers and civilisations had a very close relation. The rivers made the land on their banks exceptionally fertile. Food sources grew there in abundance. The rivers were the highways of contact and trade. They also acted as barriers against invaders. The temperature around the river banks was found to be generally temperate, neither too hot nor too cold. People in these riverine areas lived mainly on agriculture and trade. Thus they had many things in common, though their areas were separated from one another by thousands of miles.

The two classes of people who were at the top in ancient societies were the kings and the priests. They shared the source of wealth derived from agriculture and trade. The advent of the age of metals gave them more power, since they alone had the resources to make ploughs, weapons, utensils, and other necessities of life. The priests were believed to possess powers of magic and were held in awe and respect. The artisans and craftsmen were a group of skilled people no doubt, but they had to depend mainly on the two upper classes, who shared between them the sources of wealth. The merchants, as a class, were yet to organise themselves. The people living in these early ages had developed the art of writing, though its mode and medium differed. The potteries, toys and articles of use in daily life, however, were strikingly similar. They believed in the

existence of gods and goddesses in whose honour they raised temples in Egypt, Sumer and China. The only ancient seat of civilisation where temples were yet to emerge was perhaps in India during the days of the Indus Valley civilisation.

EXERCISES

(Mesopotamia)

1. Answer the following:

- (a) What does the word 'Mesopotamia' literally mean?
 - (b) What is the modern name for Mesopotamia?
 - (c) Why were the old temples in Mesopotamia built on high grounds?
2. Complete the sentences by supplying the missing words.
- (i) The mountain folks who won over the nomads of the desert are known as the——.
 - (ii) The——established their supremacy in Mesopotamia about ——B.C.
 - (iii) The peculiar form of Mesopotamian writing was——.
3. (i) Name some of the occupations of the early Mesopotamians.
 (ii) Name some of the countries with which the early Mesopotamians carried on trade.
 (iii) Describe briefly in your own words the peculiarities of Cuneiform writing.

(Egypt)

1. Describe briefly how the primitive people in Egypt lived.
2. Write, in 3 sentences of your own, what you know of the Egyptian priests.
3. Name some of the occupations of the early Egyptians.
4. Name the countries with which Egypt carried on trade. What were the main items of trade?
5. Why is Mon. Champollion remembered?
6. Fill in the gaps:
 - (a) The Egyptians were the first people in the world who devised a system of——writing.
 - (b) The exceptional fertility of the soil of Egypt is the gift of the——.

(c) The older inhabitants of Egypt were a people of the——a white race.

(d) The Egyptian king, later called the Emperor, was known as the——.

(e) The first ruler to have brought the two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt was——.

(Indus Valley)

1. What led to the discoveries of Mohenjodaro and Harappa?
2. Name some of the sites other than Mohenjodaro and Harappa where relics of ancient Indian civilisation have been discovered.
3. Draw a sketch of a house in Mohenjodaro or Harappa.
4. Describe the main relics of different categories discovered in the Indus Valley.
5. Briefly say what you know of the religious belief of the Indus Valley people.

(China)

1. (A) Answer the following:

- (i) What do you know of the Peking Man?
 - (ii) Why is the Hwang-Ho known as the Yellow River?
 - (iii) What is the length of the Yangste-Kiang?
- (B) Complete the sentences by supplying the missing words:
- (i)——is one of the earliest types of man discovered so far.
 - (ii) The Hwang-Ho is commonly known as the——.
 - (iii) The chief city in the valley of the Yellow River was——.

(Riparian civilisations)

1. Name the cradles of human civilisation and give the names of the rivers along which civilisations grew.
2. What were the main classes in which the people in the days of early civilisation were divided?

CHAPTER V

A. THE IRON AGE CIVILISATION

Introduction: The stone age gave way to the age of the metals. The first metals in use were copper, tin and a mixture of the two, viz. bronze. Iron was the last to be discovered. Its discovery and use marked a great advance in human civilisation.

1. It is not known for certain when iron was discovered. It is however possible to make a guess. An iron blade, probably 5000 years old has been discovered in one of the Egyptian pyramids. We have also come across monumental works of very ancient times. One can reasonably suppose that without the help of iron-made instruments it would not have been possible to make these monuments. Similarly iron, it may be supposed, made possible the cutting of hieroglyphics on the surface of hard rocks. There is evidence that iron was in use in ancient Greece at least in the days of Homer, who mentions iron. Some of the oldest tribes living in Armenia are also known to have learnt the use of iron. There is also evidence that the Mesopotamians too were familiar with the use of iron. It is interesting to note that no traces of iron have been discovered so far from among the relics of the Indus Valley civilisation. This had led scholars to suppose that the people of the Indus Valley, in spite of the remarkable progress they had attained in the march towards civilisation, were unfamiliar with the use of iron. The Aryans who followed them, however, knew its use.

The discovery of iron like that of fire was an

accident. It is possible that iron was first found in the ashes of a big fire on some red paint-rock. Once the connection between paint-rock and fire with iron was discovered, the early men made efforts to produce iron in their own way, in their own chosen spots like pits, where fire would be fanned by bellows.

The use of iron was an event of great significance. It brought far-reaching changes. Tin and copper were not available in plenty. The articles made of these two metals were limited in supply. But iron could be found in plenty. Hence it quickened the rate of production and added to its volume. Iron was also cheaper than bronze, tin and copper. Thus large numbers of people could use it. This gave an impetus to the growth of tools and weapons made of iron. It was possible for a poor man to possess such much-needed tools as an axe or a plough. This weakened the hold of the rich people who alone could buy and make use of tools, weapons and articles of daily use, made of bronze or tin. With the increase in the number of iron tools there was an increase in the number of men and women using them. Thus common men got more opportunities and could make themselves more useful to the society than it was possible for them to do in earlier days.

2. As a result the sphere of human activities grew wider than ever. Jungles were cleared, fallow lands were brought under cultivation and new sources of income were tapped. These made their influence felt in the social and economic life of the people. Power was no longer the monopoly of the few. People who were so long dependent upon the wealthier sections could now rely on their own resources, so far as tools and arms were concerned. Thus the army was no lon-

ger composed of persons trained and retained by the lords who supplied them arms to fight with. Thus people known as the barbarians now could equip themselves with arms and weapons of their own choice.

Thus the number of fighting men increased. The use of iron was not restricted to arms and weapons like swords, daggers, javelins, bows and arrows alone. Iron was also used in larger quantities in making articles of daily use. Since these were cheaper, their demand grew larger and larger. For this artisans and skilled workers were needed. They formed a larger section of the people than before. The increase in the production of articles helped to promote trade. The same purpose was served by improved means of transport. In the changed circumstances trade was not confined to the limits of any country; it was operated on a larger scale than ever before, both by land and water. There was thus an exchange of commodities among the countries of the Iron Age on a larger scale than ever before.

Kingship was an old institution. It dates back to the days when a tribal chief succeeded in bringing a number of other tribes under his control. The successful tribal chief thus emerged as a King. Gradually his authority went on increasing. He was the War-lord and the Chief Judge. He was even believed to possess magical powers. In some cases he was also the high priest. At a later date the king was regarded as more than a mere lord. He was a god in human form. In Egypt and Babylonia the kings were worshipped as deities. They retained this position till the Bronze Age. With the discovery and use of iron the position began to change slowly. Since arms and weapons could be produced cheaply and in large quantities, the need to depend on the kings

for distribution of arms was largely reduced. It was possible for commoners to arm themselves and to become fighters. Thus the small monarchies tended to suffer in power and prestige. The big monarchies however survived and even grew more powerful. In large countries like Egypt, Assyria, Persia and China empires came into existence.

B. THE IRON AGE WORLD

(i) Mesopotamia : Babylon

In a previous lesson we have been told about Mesopotamia, its primitive people and its early civilisation. We shall now follow the story further from the dawn of the Iron Age.

1. The discovery of iron tools made agriculture cheaper than before. It was possible for ordinary people to equip themselves with iron tools and work on the lands over expanding areas. The land was naturally fertile and under intensive cultivation. It yielded more than the people needed. Thus a surplus was left over. Naturally they were keen to utilise this surplus food. There were areas of arid lands in the neighbourhood. They were sure to make profit if they could sell food stuff in these lands. So they carried their stock on the backs of asses and in carts. They also made use of rafts and vessels and carried their goods to lands beyond their country along rivers and canals. Gradually their spheres of trading activities widened. The Sumerians are known to have carried on trade with Egypt and the countries of western Asia besides Crete. Coined money had not yet come into existence but lumps in silver, or in some cases gold, were used as media of exchange. Trade in its turn gave incentive

to the art of writing. Accounts had to be kept and this led to the larger use of written records.

The increase of activities in agriculture and trade meant that the people of the iron age were economically better off than their predecessors. Naturally wealth was concentrated in the treasuries of the kings and the priestly classes. The Mesopotamians believed in the existence of a number of gods and goddesses. They raised big and massive temples in honour of their deities. These were built of bricks and stood on the top of mounds built with clay and sun-baked bricks. A flight of steps was constructed so that the top could be reached. In course of time the temples grew bigger in size. Soon afterwards stones replaced bricks. Huge blocks of stones were brought along waterways and used as materials for building temples. At Erech the ruins of a temple measuring 245 ft. by 100 ft. have been discovered. Each temple had large estates attached to it. The expenses for their maintenance and of the staff, including free workers and slaves, were met out of these estates. Animals considered sacred were also kept in the temples. Some of these temples had also workshops attached to them. A large staff of workers were employed therein. The walls often bore excellent works of decoration and written texts.

2. The priests enjoyed a high status in society and state. They held large estates, engaged in trade and filled high offices. They could foretell the future from their knowledge of the stars and the movement of several birds and animals.

The priests were the most learned section of the people. They treasured the store of their knowledge with utmost care and handed it from generation to

generation. They ran schools where youths chosen by them were taught. From the large number of written texts, inscribed on tablets and walls, it is evident that learning was widely practised. This was due to contact with other countries through the medium of trade. The Mesopotamians carried with them their knowledge which was enriched with experience about people, inhabiting regions beyond their own. The growth of towns, and the rise in the population led to a diffusion of culture. The old cuneiform script not only survived, its use was also made more extensive. The subjects of these writings also grew to be more varied. The Mesopotamians were not only interested in knowing more about objects of daily use, things with which they were surrounded, they were also eager to know about life after death. Their ideas about the life hereafter were in many ways similar to those of the Egyptians.

The first settlers in Mesopotamia to have attained a high level of civilisation were the Sumerians. They entered Mesopotamia in about 4000 years B.C. as we have seen already. After some time they were overpowered by a desert tribe of Semitic origin known as the Akkadians. A thousand years later the Akkadians were forced to submit to the rule of another desert tribe. They were the Amorites. The greatest king of the Amorites was *Hammurabi*. He built for himself a splendid city in Babylon. Babylonia, of which Babylon was the capital, was the best administered kingdom in those days and this was mainly because of the set of good laws which Hammurabi gave to his people. According to legends these laws were revealed to him by the chief Babylonian deity, Marduk. The laws mainly based on traditional customs, were engra-

ved upon a stone slab and placed for display in the temple of Marduk in Babylon. Some of these would perhaps appear strange to modern men. One of the maxims was based on the old principle 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. To give an example, if a house collapsed and killed the house-owner's son, the owner was within his rights if he killed the son of the man who was entrusted with the building of the house. At any rate, the importance of the code lies in the fact that it was the earliest written code of laws, known so far.

3. From the code of Hammurabi's laws, it would appear that the idea that an offence committed by a person against another was more than an offence against an individual and that it was also an offence against the community, as the state was yet to grow. The code also encouraged private vengeance. It was thus not an ideal system of laws. But it reveals the state of society in those days. That the wealthier sections of the people enjoyed special protection is evident from the fact that the laws enabled them not only to mortgage the land of the debtor but also to enslave him, his wife and his children. Interests on loans too were high varying between 10 and 33 per cent. Professional soldiers and high officials were often guilty of extortion. Even judges were not above corruption, even though Hammurabi announced that the object of the code was 'to make manifest justice in the land, to destroy the wicked and to prevent the strong oppressing the weak'. It was a good maxim but unfortunately it was more observed in breach.

(ii) Egypt and her Empire

In the days when the local chiefs came under the rule of the Pharaohs, Egypt passed under what is known

as the days of the Old Kingdom. The last great king of the Old Kingdom was Pepi I. He ruled in about 2700 B. C. After his death there was a period of decline. Egypt split up into a number of smaller political units. About the end of the third millennium B.C. political unity was revived under a line of kings who ruled with their capital in Thebes. They could not, however, keep their power for long. About 1800 B. C. a tribe from the north, known as the *Hyksos*, conquered the land. They introduced horses and chariots into Egypt and enabled the people to fight back with greater success. The Hyksos were, however, overthrown in about 1580 B.C. From this date began the rule of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

1. The founder of the Eighteenth dynasty was *Amhose*. The most well-known among his successors was Thutmose III. Under him the power of Egypt spread over Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine. His vessels sailed the Mediterranean and compelled the islands of Cyprus and Crete to become his subordinate allies. The Empire of Egypt was then at its height extending over a wide expanse of land and water.

The Empire posed new problems. To keep it intact the Egyptian rulers had to devise new methods. It was necessary to prevent internal revolts as well as to check attacks from outside. This led to the employment of larger number of officials on the one hand, and the strengthening of the army on the other. It was also necessary to post guards at strategic points in the various outlying parts of the Empire. For this purpose the Egyptian Government set up a large number of colonies. These were military posts as well as centres from which Egyptian culture was diffused among the original settlers. Thus an Egyptian colony

was inhabited by a large number of Egyptian civilians—traders, artisans and priestly classes, besides soldiers.

2. The Egyptians used to worship many gods and goddesses. The Nile, to which they owed their prosperity, was worshipped through god Osiris. The sun too was similarly worshipped. Various rituals formed parts of this worship. These were conducted by the priests. The latter were held in great respect. They wielded great power which rivalled that of the Pharaohs. They foretold the future, advised on the auspicious time when seeds were to be sown. They were the custodians of Egypt's ancient learning and culture. They owned vast landed estates and formed the wealthiest section among the Egyptian population. Gradually their power grew to be so large that they even challenged secular authority. About 1200 B. C. Egypt lost its unity and split up in two separate political divisions. Thus, while lower Egypt was under the rule of the Twenty-first dynasty, the ruling authority over upper Egypt passed into the possession of the high priest of Amon and his successors.

(iii) Iran

The world of Mesopotamia and Egypt showed signs of decline after thirty active centuries. As the old powers were on the decline, new and vigorous powers were about to take their place. The most important among the new powers were the Persians or the Medes, as the ancient Greeks called them. They were an Aryan people who originally lived along the shores of the Caspian Sea. Later they moved out in large numbers in search of new lands. In the course of their wanderings some of them moved out and settled in the regions around the mountains overlooking the plateau of

Iran. In course of time they set up a kingdom which came to be known after them as Median. The Medians, however, did not remain in power for long. A kindred tribe, known as the Persians, overthrew them and took possession of the land, now known as Iran or Persia. Here they laid the foundation of a great kingdom. In course of time this kingdom grew to be an empire—the most powerful in the world of those days. The founder of this empire was Cyrus who belonged to the middle of the 6th century B.C. He proved himself to be more than a match for his enemies. The first kingdom which fell before his attack was Lydia, situated in the west of Asia Minor. Then came the turn of Babylon. The next Persian ruler was Cyrus's son Cambyses. He too was a great warrior-king. He added Egypt to his kingdom. Under Darius the kingdom grew still larger and reached as far east as the border of India. The only country which the Persians, in spite of repeated efforts, failed to subjugate was the mainland of Greece. The struggle was long and bitter. Eventually the Persians abandoned their campaigns in Greece. But for over three centuries till their overthrow by the great Macedonian conqueror Alexander, Persia remained the greatest military power in the world.

2. The greatness of Persia is not to be measured only in terms of its military strength. It gave to the world one of its greatest religious teachers. He was Zoroaster or Zorathushtra. He lived somewhere in Eastern Iran about 1200 B.C. Some would assign him to a period two hundred years later. In Zoroaster's view life in this earth was a constant battle between the two opposing forces of good and evil, light and darkness. At the head of the forces of good and light

stood Ahuramazda or Mazda, while the forces of evil and darkness was led by Ahriman. The great teacher called upon men to place themselves on the side of Ahuramazda and to fight the forces of evil. His disciples looked upon fire as a sacred symbol of the God of light and kept it burning in their temple. The Indian community of the Parsees are followers of Zoroaster. His writings and doctrines were later compiled in a book, called the *Avesta* or the *Zend-Avesta*. The emphasis throughout this holy book is on good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

(iv) The Jews

1. We have seen that the Semitic people who once held sway in Sumer and Egypt were compelled to yield before the Aryan-speaking people known as the Medes and the Persians. But even then a section of the Semitic people was seen to play an important role in human history when their glories in Sumer and Egypt were nearly gone. These people were known as the Hebrews or the Jews. They were a race of shepherds. Their original home was the land of Ur situated on the mouth of the Euphrates. At a later stage they left their home and wandered from place to place in search of new grazing land for their flock. For some time they lived in Babylonia. But their stay proved to be short-lived as they were driven out by the royal army of Babylonia. After long wanderings they found shelter in Egypt. They lived there for nearly five centuries till the rulers of Egypt reduced them to the rank of slaves and subjected them to various degrees of oppression. Their life was miserable but there was no way out since the frontiers were guarded by the Egyptian soldiers who would not allow them to move out.

2. In the days of extreme misery and slavery, a great leader arose among them. He was a youngman named Moses. He held out to his oppressed brethren the hope of freedom. He urged them to leave the land where they were compelled to work as slaves and were not treated as human beings. At last he and his men succeeded in evading the guardsmen and came out of Egypt. Moses led his fellow-men into the plain at the feet of Mount Sinai. Here Jehova, the God of the Thunder and Storm, revealed to him His Commandments. These concerned a code of behaviour which would make them lead holy lives.

Elated with this divine revelation Moses now called upon his men to travel further till they could find a good and habitable piece of land to live in and claim it as their own. The journey was long and tiresome across vast stretches of desert. At length they came to a land which appeared pleasant. This site was known as Palestine. It was then inhabited by another Semitic race, known as the Canaanite. Between them and the Jews a conflict ensued. It ended in the victory of the latter. They entered the valleys and settled there. Gradually they built big cities and caused a big temple to be constructed in a town which they named Jerusalem, or the 'Home of Peace'. The wandering people thus came to their journey's end and found for themselves a land of their own. Unfortunately Moses died before the process of settlement was over. But he had given his people the leadership without which their dream of a new home would not have been fulfilled. What was more, he had taught his people new lessons in religion which marked out the Jews as the first nation in the world to worship a single God.

EXERCISES

1. Answer the following :

- (i) What were the first metals in use ?
- (ii) At which date was iron discovered?
- (iii) Did the Indus Valley people know the use of iron?
2. (a) Why is the discovery of iron important?
- (b) What changes followed from the discovery and use of iron?

(Mesopotamia : Babylon)

1. (a) The lands in Mesopotamia yielded surplus crop. What was done to utilise it?
- (b) Draw a picture of a Mesopotamian temple with its environs.
- (c) Describe briefly the activities of the priests in Mesopotamia.
- (d) Who were the Akkadians?
2. Who was Hammurabi? On what does his fame rest?

(Egypt)

1. (i) Name the last king of the old Kingdom in Egypt.
- (ii) Who were the Hyksos?
- (iii) Name at least 3 Egyptian Pharaohs.
2. Write a brief note on the religious beliefs of the ancient Egyptians.

(Iran)

1. Here are some jumbled names. Put them in order of succession: Darius, Cambyses, Cyrus.
2. Who was Zoroaster? What were his main teachings?

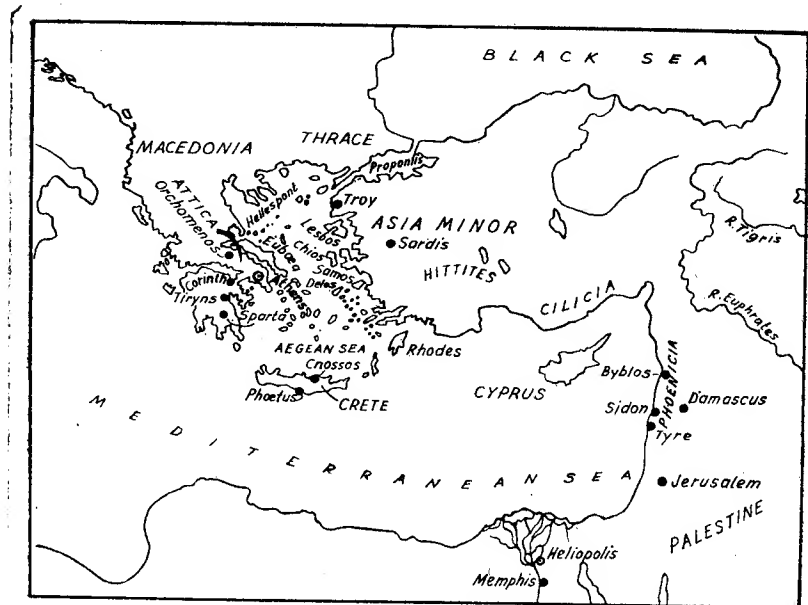
(The Jews)

1. What was the original home-land of the Jews? What was the other name by which they were known?
2. Tell briefly what you know of Moses.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLORY THAT WAS GREECE

Greece was the birth place of civilisation in Europe. The beginning of the civilisation so far as the main land of Greece is concerned, can be assigned to at least 1500 years before the birth of Christ. The civilisation is known as Greek or Hellenic after the name of Hellen, the legendary common ancestor of the Greeks. They originally lived in the north on the banks of the Danube. As their numbers grew and they needed



The Aegean and ancient Greece.

fresh pastures, they moved southward and came to settle in the land which after them came to be known

as Hellas or Greece. For some time they had to wage war against the Pelasgians who were the original inhabitants of Greece. At first they were not different from the race of the primitive shepherds. They were divided into a number of clans. Gradually they settled down and took to farming. To them belongs the distinction of developing the earliest civilisation on the mainland of Europe.

1. The Greeks learnt the first lessons of civilisation from the people living in Crete and some islands of the Aegean sea. They were familiar with the use of metals.

They showed great skill and workmanship in producing tools, potteries, ornaments, vases and weapons. These were in great demand in other countries, like Egypt and Mesopotamia. They built splendid palaces, tombs, forts and cities. The Greeks on the mainland watched with interest and wondered at the progress won by the Aegeans. Gradually they began to imitate their ways and became civilised themselves.

2. The first glimpses of Greek civilisation are provided by the two Greek national epics—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These are believed to have been composed by Homer. For many centuries men thought that the cities, kingdoms, kings and nobles described in the two epics did not exist except in the imagination of the poet. But Heinrich Schliemann, a German archaeologist, actually dug out relics from ancient sites in Troy and proved that the Homeric cities and people were not imaginary. The poems in fact give us glimpses into the social, cultural and political life of the Greeks in the same way as our *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* do in regard to the so-called Epic age of Indian history.

After their arrival in Greece, the people took up agriculture as their main occupation and settled down in fixed areas. Greece was a small mountainous country. The areas where the people, divided into groups, settled were small in area. These were mostly villages. Later towns too grew up. The settlers in each village or town formed distinct communities. Each unit was known as a *polis* or city-state. There were several hundreds of such city-states in ancient Greece. As these city-states were small in area and the number of people living therein was limited, it was possible for the adult people to take direct and active part in the affairs of the state. Thus Greece became the home of democracy or representative government. Every Greek, born of Greek parents, enjoyed the right to bear arms, to hold office, to take part in religious ceremonies of the state and to share in the political life of the state.

Thus the Greek communities lived in distinct areas of their own. They lived independent of one another. They did not owe allegiance to any common authority holding sway over the entire mainland of Greece. This may give the impression that the Greeks were divided against themselves. This is only partly true. Politically, the Greeks were no doubt divided. But there were strong cultural bonds of unity among the Greeks. Irrespective of the areas they might live in, the state to which they might belong, all the Greeks looked upon themselves as the descendants of a common ancestor. They spoke the same language, they looked upon the same books, the Homeric poems, as their national literature, observed the same religious rites and took part in the national games. All these bonds fostered a sense of cultural unity among the

Greeks, which was even stronger than unity that political bonds could promote.

3. Greece was both small and mountainous. The extent of fertile soil was limited. The yield fell short of the needs of the people. This made the Greeks undertake journeys or voyages abroad, where they could either settle or from where they would bring food. The lands were held jointly by a family. If a member of a particular family, by his own effort, would acquire new land, this was considered not as individual property but as the property of the family as a whole. Thus ambitious people often went to other lands beyond Greece where they could own lands in their own right. The Greeks were by nature an adventurous people. On three sides the country was surrounded by seas. The coastline was broken and the sea reached the interior of the land. This made the Greeks a maritime people. Their love of adventure on the one hand, and maritime habits on the other, encouraged them to undertake voyages to the islands of the Mediterranean and the countries around it. Trade was yet another motive. All these led to the establishment of a large number of Greek colonies abroad. Wherever the Greeks went they carried their own laws, customs, language and ways of living. Thus there grew up in the Mediterranean world vast area known as Greater Hellas. It reminds us of Greater India, nearer to our country, applied to the Asiatic countries and islands where the Indians had settled in fairly large number and had done much to promote Indian culture abroad.

Greece, as said earlier, was divided into several hundred city-states. The foremost among these were the two states of Athens and Sparta. Athens was the

chief city in Attica, situated in Central Greece. Sparta was situated in Greece, south of the Isthmus of Corinth, known as the Peloponnesus or the land of the Pelops.

4. Athens, like other states in Greece, was at first under the rule of kings. Then kingship was abolished. Power thereupon passed into the hands of the few who were members of the nobility. As they began to rule solely for the interest of the class to which they belonged, the people rose up in arms and drove them away. But they were unable to seize power for themselves. Some members of the nobility posed as the champions of the people's rights and seized power. Such rulers were usurpers. The Greeks called them *tyrants*. The rule of the tyrants was short-lived. The people at length asserted their rights and got power for themselves. Thus Athens at last became a democratic state.

Socially the Athenians were divided into a number of groups, based on birth. There were also divisions on the basis of wealth. But the citizens who were mostly descendants of Athenian parents were given all facilities for enjoying and exercising civil and political rights. The aim of education in Athens was to help the Athenians to become fine specimens of humanity. They were given a liberal education. Parents were liable to punishment if they neglected to educate their children. As a result the Athenians reached a high level of culture. The greatest among the Greek philosophers, dramatists, architects and artists were all Athenian.

5. Sparta, like Athens, started with monarchy. Unlike Athens, the monarchy in Sparta survived till very late times. The most remarkable feature about the

Spartan monarchy was that it had two kings in place of the usual one. Next to the kings there was a magistracy of five. These five executives were known as *Ephors*. They enjoyed considerable power and could even bring charges against the kings under certain circumstances. The ordinary citizens could meet no doubt at an Assembly but the real authority was vested in a smaller council composed of the representatives of the wealthier people. The large bulk of the Spartan population was composed of the Helots or slaves. They were regarded as the property of the state and were assigned to citizens for working in their farms, gardens or even houses.

The Spartan citizens suffered from a sense of lack of safety. This was inevitable in a system under which the bulk of the people were compelled to live more or less as slaves. Hence they felt the need of a strong army and a strong police. The aim of Spartan education was to fashion every citizen as a soldier, above everything else. The Spartan government tried to foster iron discipline among its citizens. An infant was not allowed to live if it was found to lack good health. Between the age of seven and twenty every Spartan boy and youth was placed under vigorous training. No one was allowed to leave the barrack until he was thirty. It is not surprising that no great poet or philosopher arose in Sparta.

Thus the social and political life in Sparta was a striking contrast of the state and society of Athens. Sparta's main strength lay in her army. She was the strongest military power in Greece and her leadership was universally acknowledged. But a time came when Sparta found a strong rival in Athens. The latter had a powerful fleet. It enabled her to extend not only her

commerce but also her dominions in lands across the seas. In the days of the greatest peril of Greece due to the series of Persian invasions, it was the navy of Athens which saved Greece. This gave Athens a prestige unknown before. Soon after there was a contest for leadership between Sparta and Athens. A war, known as the Peloponnesian War, was waged between the two for twenty-seven years. At the end the Empire of Athens went down before the combined attacks of Sparta and Persia (404 B.C.).

6. The real greatness of Athens lay in her achievements in the fields of

art and culture. The most remarkable among the Athenian leaders was Pericles. He was the most accomplished person of his age. He completed the pattern of democracy in Athens. He made Athens 'the Queen of Hellas', i.e. the centre of an empire extending over land and water. But he was not content with that alone. He wanted that Athens should become also the 'School of Hellas', i.e. the centre of the highest intellectual activities. Under his able leadership a group of splendid public buildings and temples arose. The works of art included fine



Pericles.

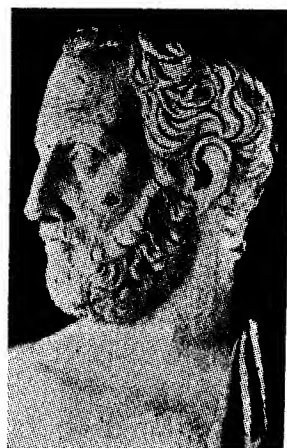
specimens of sculpture, literature, specially drama which made remarkable progress. History and philosophy did not lag behind. The period of his leadership was indeed the golden age of Athens. While Aristophanes shone as a writer of comedies, his contemporaries, Sophocles and Euripides excelled in tragedies. History in this age was represented by Thucydides. His work, *History of the Peloponnesian War* is regarded as the world's first scientific work in history. But by far the most famous thinker of this age, and indeed of any age, was the great philosopher Socrates. He placed rationalism above everything. "Truth," he said, "was the highest aim in life and this could be acquired only



Herodotus.



Socrates.



Thucydides.

through knowledge." He found fault with many existing beliefs and warned those who cared to listen to him to give up superstition. Those who stood for traditional thinking and orthodox beliefs looked upon him as a dangerous teacher. They accused him of irreligion. The court found him guilty and sentenced

him to death. The great philosopher bravely met his end by voluntarily drinking a cup of poison.

We have mentioned Thucydides as the world's first scientific historian. But he had a senior contemporary who wrote the history of the Persian Wars. He was Herodotus. His manner of writing was like that of a story-teller. He was often uncritical. But his writings are highly interesting. He gave to his countrymen the very first history book.

7. The end of the Peloponnesian war brought the Athenian Empire to a close. Then for some years Spartan supremacy was revived. This proved to be short lived. Thereupon followed a period of Theban supremacy. This lasted only for one generation. After the fall of Thebes, Greece lapsed into old divisions and a state of chaos. But a new power arose on the scene, destined to give back to Greece not only her unity but also make her the centre of a world-empire. The state which restored unity was Macedon and the man who made Macedon the centre of a world empire was Alexander.

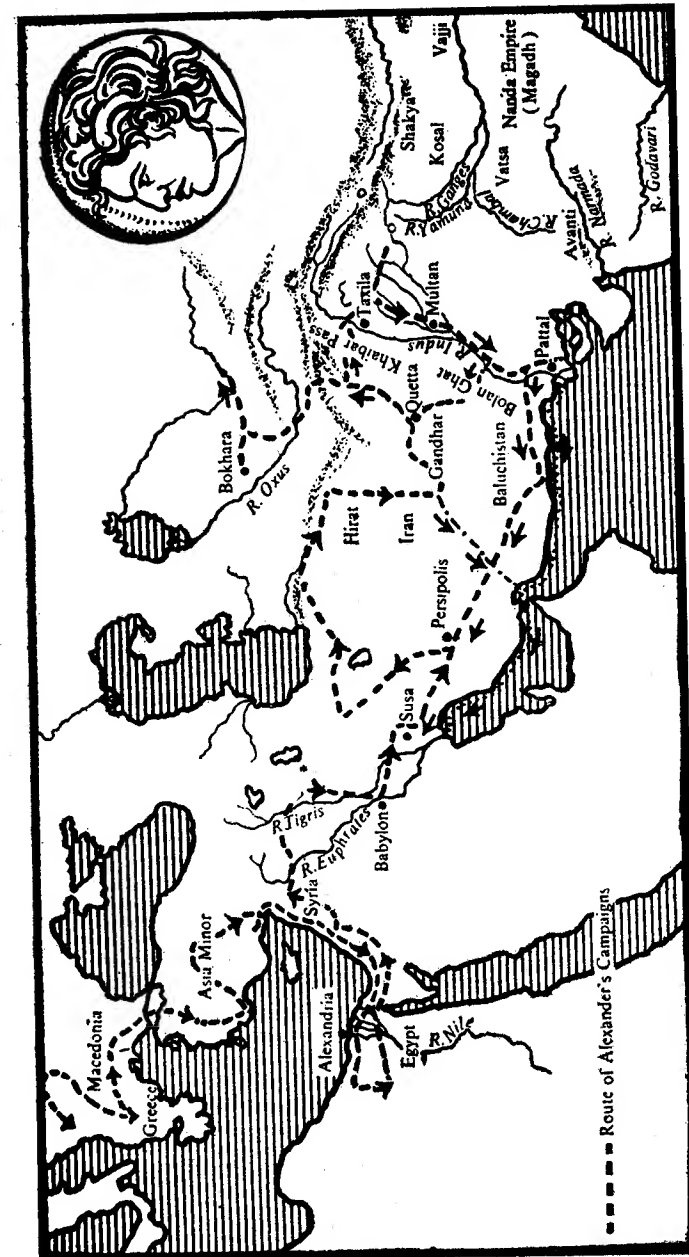


Alexander of Macedon.

8. For many years Macedon was looked upon by the rest of Greece as a barbarian state. But one of Macedon's kings fashioned his countrymen as sturdy warriors. He was Philip. With the newly organised Macedonian army he was able to bring vast areas in

Greece under his control. He even thought of extending his conquests beyond Greece. His main target was Persia. He commenced vast preparations for the invasion of the eastern empire. He, however, died in the midst of these preparations. His son, then in his youth, took the vow to complete his father's mission. This youth, the son and successor of Philip, named Alexander, was destined to earn fame as one of the world's greatest military heroes.

Putting himself at the head of his army Alexander started out on his mission to conquer Persia (334 B. C.). He crossed into Asia and won his first victory at Granicus, capturing a number of cities in Asia Minor. He then turned his attention to areas situated on the sea coast. At Issus he won a decisive victory against a much larger enemy force. Sidon, Tyre and Gaza submitted to him, one after another. Next came the turn of Egypt. A decisive victory followed resulting in the fall of Babylon. The successes won so far emboldened the conqueror. He now thought of pursuing his conquests further till he became the Lord of the East. He crossed into India along the Khyber Pass. There was no united resistance, and Alexander received submission of fortresses in quick succession. The first serious opposition came from King Porus who ruled over the Kingdom lying between the Hydaspes (Jhelum) and the Akesines (Chinab). Porus fought bravely but was out-numbered and taken prisoner with nine wounds on his body. The victorious general then advanced eastward, subduing several tribal peoples on the way till he reached the bank of the Hyphasis (Beas). His men, however, refused to move further. They were home-sick. The Indian heat was too oppressive for them to bear. There was a report



Alexander's conquests.

that the powerful King of Magadh (South Bihar) had kept ready a vast army to meet the invaders. All attempts on the part of Alexander to make his men cross the river failed. He was thus compelled to order a retreat (326 B.C.). He went back, fiercely fighting the tribes who refused to submit and reached the mouth of the Indus. While he sent away half of his army by sea under the command of Nearchos, the remaining army he led through unknown territories. In May 324 B. C. he reached Susa. But soon after, while in Babylon, he suddenly fell ill. The illness proved fatal. The great general, one of the greatest known to history, died a premature death at the bare age of 33. His dream of world conquest remained unfulfilled.

9. The Macedonian Empire did not survive Alexander's death. It was divided among his generals. For the next century and a half Macedon proper was able to retain her freedom. But a new power, viz. Rome had arisen in the meantime. It went on expanding on all sides, east and west. By 168 B.C. Macedon was conquered and made a province under the Empire of Rome.

EXERCISES

1. Answer the following:
 - (a) Why were the Greeks known as Hellenic?
 - (b) Where from did the Greeks come to the mainland of Greece?
 - (c) From whom did the Greeks learn the first lessons of civilisation?
2. Why are the following names important in the history of Greece: Crete, Troy, Sparta, Athens and Thebes?
3. What were the bonds of union that held the Greeks together inspite of their political divisions?
4. Why did the Greeks set up colonies abroad?

5. What do you mean by the following: The Iliad and the Odyssey, Polis, Greater Hellas, Tyrants, Democracy, Ephors, and Helots?
6. Why are the following persons famous: Aristophanes, Sophocles, Pericles, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Socrates?
7. To whom do the following statements apply?
 - (i) These two poems are the national literature of the Greeks.
 - (ii) He was the most accomplished person of his age and the most remarkable among the leaders of Athens.
 - (iii) He was by far the most famous thinker of his age and indeed of any age.
 - (iv) He gave his countrymen the first ever book on History.
 - (v) His work, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, is regarded as the world's first scientific work in history.
8. Place in order of succession the name of the States which attained supremacy in Greece: Athens, Thebes, Macedon and Sparta.
9. Name the countries conquered by Alexander of Macedon.

CHAPTER VII

THE MIGHT THAT WAS ROME

The earliest story of Rome is given in legends. The city, legends say, was founded by Romulus who gave it its name at about 753 B.C. For about two centuries and a half Rome was under the rule of seven successive kings. The last of these kings was a cruel tyrant. The people rose up in arms against his misrule. They drove him out, and put an end to monarchy and proclaimed Rome as a Republic (510 B.C.).

1. Legends are not history. Even then they sometimes contain elements of historical truth. For instance, it is possible that, as in Greece and many other old countries, Rome, in the early days, was ruled by the kings. As in Greece, so in Rome monarchy ultimately gave way to a democratic form of government. One may also feel certain that the people who lived in Rome had certain advantages over other people living in Italy. Rome was situated in the centre of Italy, about 17 miles from the mouth of the Tiber. Its position on the Palatine Hills, one of the seven hills, was another great advantage. Gradually the communities settled on the seven hills, formed themselves as one state. Soon Rome's authority spread over the neighbouring areas. Chief among these was Latium. The Romans adopted a liberal policy towards the non-Romans and shared with them their rights and duties as citizens. The progress of Rome did not stop with central Italy. It went on expanding till the whole of Italy was brought under Rome's power. Even then Rome's ambition

was not fulfilled. Ultimately Rome emerged as a world power. Indeed 'Rome was not built in a day'. It took three centuries for Rome to reach the position of a world empire.

2. Naturally the expansion of Rome involved her in numerous conflicts. The first serious conflict was fought with Carthage. Carthage was the leading commercial power with a firm hold on the greater part of the African coast, Spain and some parts of France. It belonged to a Semitic people known as the Phoenicians. Its course of time Carthage made a bid for supremacy in the Mediterranean. It struck her leaders that the key to the Mediterranean lay through Sicily. About the time that the Carthaginians were getting ready to extend their influence over Sicily, the Romans had commenced looking beyond the Italian mainland. The conflict between Carthage and Rome over the possession of Sicily and through Sicily of the Mediterranean world is one of the greatest wars known to ancient history.

The war, known as the *Punic War*, was fought in three stages. The first war was fought between 264 and 241 B.C. It ended in the extension of Rome's authority over the whole of Sicily except Syracuse. The second round of the conflict started twenty-two years later. It saw fierce fighting on both sides. The Carthaginian leader Hannibal showed outstanding military feats in crossing the Alps at the head of a large and powerful army. The Romans suffered series of defeats no doubt, but their spirit remained unsubdued. They fought desperately and bravely, some time, evading the enemy, at others, meeting them on their chosen grounds. Their tactics paid them well. In the end the Second Punic War ended with a decisive victory won

by the Romans at Zama (202 B.C.). Carthage was compelled to surrender Spain and pay a huge indemnity.

The power of Carthage was scotched but not killed. Her attempts to recover her lost power made the Romans jealous. After a lull of more than fifty years, the Romans who had in the meantime enhanced their power and territories enormously, made war on Carthage for the third and last time. It was a short but fierce war in which the Carthaginians were besieged. They fought back as best as they could. But the Romans overpowered them and compelled them to surrender after six days of fierce street fighting. A large number out of 50,000 Carthaginians who survived were sold into slavery and the city was put to flames and completely destroyed (146 B. C.).

3. Early society in Rome was not much unlike the society in Greece. There were two broad divisions—the nobles and the common, the rich and the poor. The former were the *Patricians*. Though fewer in number they enjoyed greater rights and privileges. The *Plebeians* were men of the multitude. They were much larger in number, but they were placed under various handicaps. Socially they were treated as an inferior class. Politically they suffered from several disadvantages and were debarred from holding offices. Their main discontent, however, arose from economic grievances. They were not allowed to hold some categories of lands. They were often in debt. The law provided that if a debtor was unable to pay back his debt, he would lose his freedom and become a slave to the creditor.

It is thus evident that the society in Rome was based on inequality. To deny the bulk of the people social and civil rights was bad in principle. The privileged

classes at last realised the danger that lay in it, and by slow degrees they removed the inequalities from which the Plebeians suffered and made them enjoy equal status with the rest.

4. Even when the Patricians and the Plebeians became one in the eyes of law, there remained a distinction between free citizens and the slaves. The wealthy and aristocratic sections continued to hold more power and rights than the less wealthy and the poor. Not only that, there was a large class of people who were treated as slaves. Slavery was an old institution in Rome. The children of slave-parents swelled their rank. Moreover, the vast conquest effected by Rome also added to the number of slaves, for the war-prisoners, as a matter of rule, were compelled to live and work as slaves. Slave-labour was cheap and the tendency to employ slaves went on increasing in the working of mines and fields. The use of slaves as workers in the fields put the old classes of small farmers to great disadvantages. They found cultivation unprofitable. They left their village homes and came over to the cities where they had little or no means of employment. They formed what is known as the city rabble.

Slavery was thus a source of evil in more ways than one. Even when it remained in full swing, there were many who did not approve of it. The Romans too learnt to be more humane in their dealings with the slaves. Laws were so amended that a slave could work to regain his freedom. An owner was also permitted to declare a slave free, if he so desired.

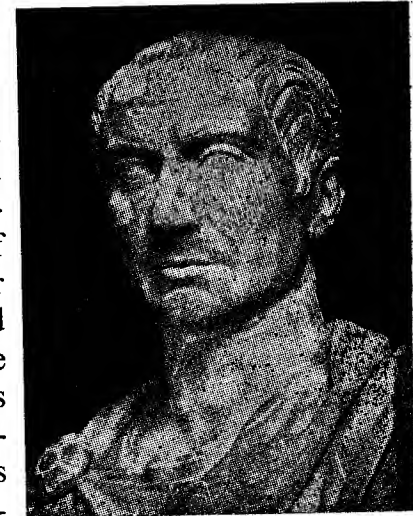
It was natural that the slaves felt unhappy about their lot. Sometimes they raised their voice in protest, at times they even rose up in arms. One such revolt

took a serious turn. Its leader was Spartacus. He was employed as a gladiator. He felt hurt at the cruel way in which he and his fellow-slaves were treated. He grew desperate and resolved upon an armed revolt. He had the support of about 100 slaves in the beginning. Gradually their number began to grow till it rose to be 1,000. They repulsed the armies twice and began to march towards the capital. The Government, now fully aware of the danger, sent a large army under Praetor Crassus to meet the rebels. The slave-army fought bravely but were outnumbered and defeated. Spartacus fell fighting bravely (71 B.C.). His name is honoured even today as one of the early rebels against injustice, cruelty and inequality.

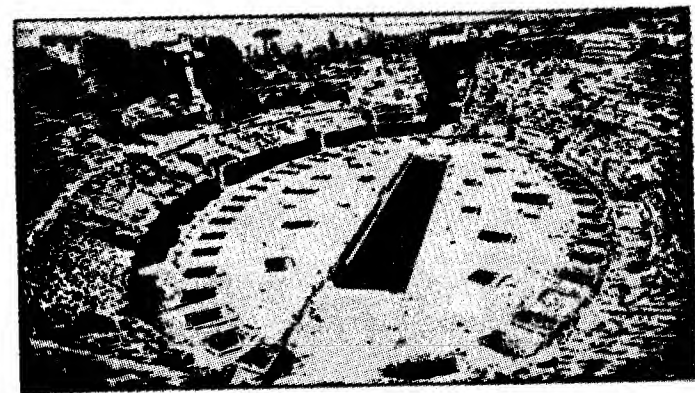
5. The Republic of Rome was founded in 510 B.C. It gained in strength steadily and came to possess the largest empire in the ancient world. The early successes of Rome were due to the good and noble traits of the Roman character. But as their power grew to enormous heights, the Romans lost many of their old virtues. The agricultural produce of Rome did not yield much profit since foreign corn was available in plenty at much cheaper rates. The class of small peasant-proprietors went out of existence. The towns and cities were filled with half-starved rabbles. Discontent in the provinces grew more and more acute. The armies grew insubordinate and made open bids for political power. Ambitious persons tried to exploit the situation to their advantage, since attempts to reform the existing state had ended in failure. At this uncertain and dangerous situation there appeared a leader who was convinced that he could deliver the country from the evils from which it suffered.

6. The man who gave leadership to Rome in her

hour of crisis was Julius Caesar. His public career began with his election as an overseer of the public games. His rise since then was rapid. He strengthened his position by an alliance with Crassus, the wealthiest man in Rome and Pompey, the most popular military leader of Rome. In 65 B.C. Caesar became Consul. The old leaders of the Senate were jealous of his power. They were relieved when Caesar was sent to Gaul as a Pro-Consul. Here Caesar not only subdued the rebels but what was more important for him, built up a strong and efficient army. He had already drawn

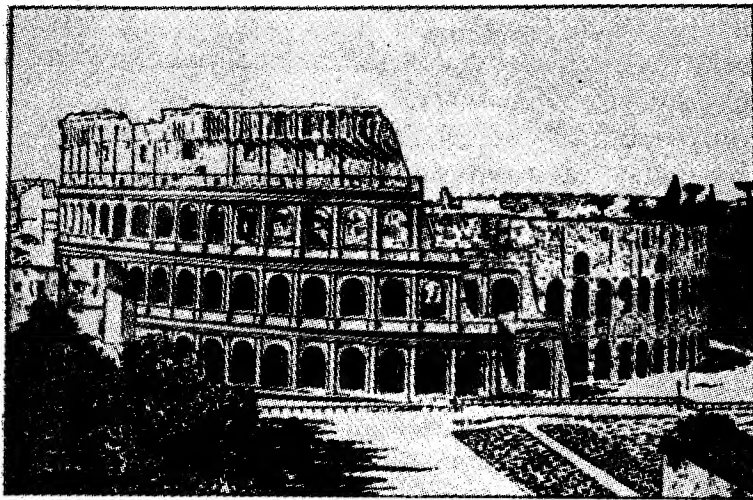


Julius Caesar.



Rome's Amphitheatre.

up his plan. He felt that only an exceptionally strong leader could save Rome. He looked upon himself as the destined leader. In the meantime Crassus had died. Pompey was won over by the Senators. Caesar found himself isolated except from his loyal army. The Senate, out to discredit and render him powerless, ordered him to disband his army. Caesar resolved to defy the Senate. He crossed the Rubicon and marched towards Italy. It was a triumphant march till the Senatorial party led by Pompey was defeated in a series of battles fought in widely covered areas in Italy, Spain, Greece and Carthage. In 45 B.C. Caesar entered Rome in triumph. Public honour and titles, one after another, were conferred on him. He



Colosseum of Rome.

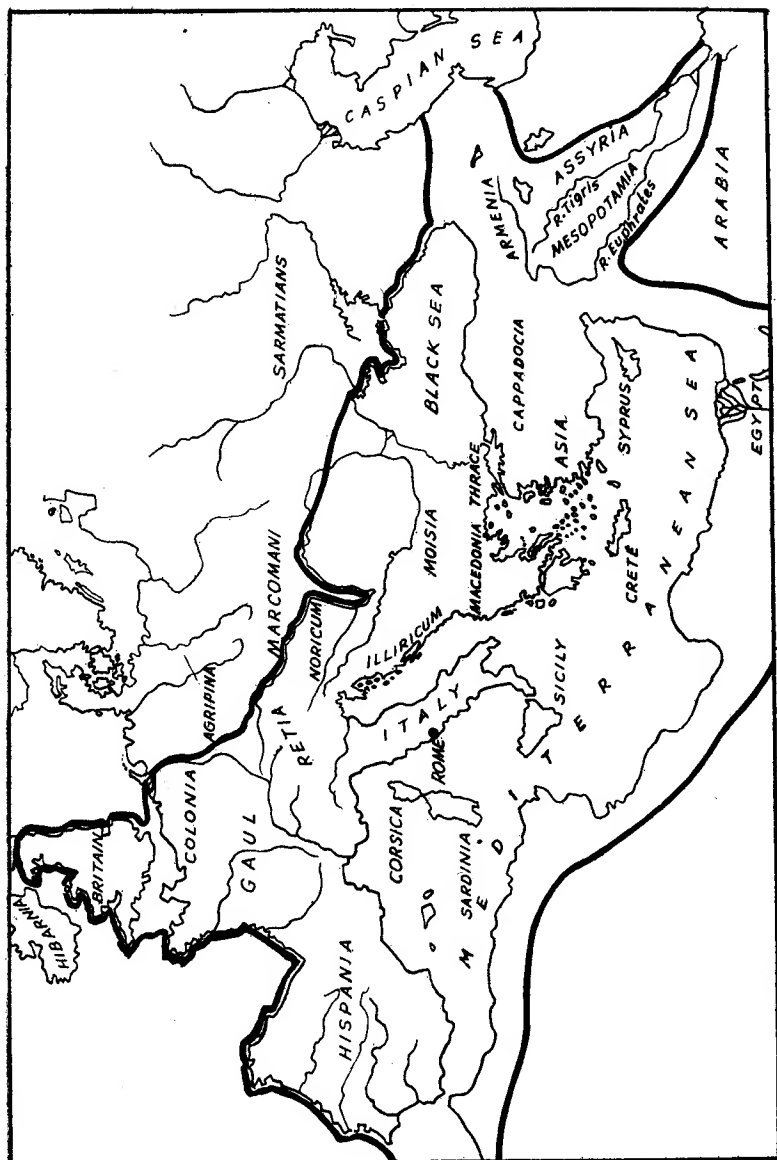
made himself dictator for life and assumed the title of Emperor. He, however, took care to exercise the supreme power, thus vested in him, with a view to doing good to the people. He adopted many benevolent

measures, like the extension of political rights and rights of citizenship. He promoted colonies which did much to spread Roman civilisation beyond Italy. He reformed the calendar and divided the year into 12 months in almost the same manner in which they are observed today.

But however well-intentioned the reforms were, there were men in Rome who were convinced that Caesar's rule was a by-word for dictatorship and that its continuance would mean the end of democracy. They thought that the only way in which that danger could be averted would be by getting rid of Caesar. They plotted his murder. One day as Caesar entered the Senate-Hall, the conspirators fell upon him, attacking him with daggers and sharp weapons. At first Caesar resisted but when he saw Marcus Brutus, whom he had loved as his son, among the attackers, he simply uttered the words in agony—"Et in Brute", (You too Brutus), gave up resistance and fell dying at the foot of the statue of his rival Pompey (44 B.C.).

The murder of Caesar neither saved Democracy nor prevented Empire. Within a few years of his death, Caesar's nephew Octavian, seized supreme power and became in practice the founder of a line of Emperors. The Emperors, belonging to various dynasties, ruled for more than four centuries. During this period the power of Rome extended further, spreading over vast areas in Europe, Asia and Africa so that the Emperors became the absolute rulers of the greatest Empire the world had hitherto seen.

7. But underlying the glory and splendour there lay the germs of weakness. The Government had developed the means of communication, constructed a network of roads and highways connecting the



Extent of the Roman Empire.

various parts of the Empire. They gave to the people what was known as *Pax Romana* or the peace of Rome. Their army was a well-organised unit. But there was another side to the picture. The old class of small farmers was gone. In the cities and towns the number of unemployed youths went on increasing. The serfs, slaves and bonded labourers lived in misery. The Christians whose numbers were daily increasing were oppressed and not allowed to profess their religion in public. All these clearly proved that everything was not shaping well for the state. A belated attempt was made by Emperor Constantine in the 20s of the 4th century A.D. to right the wrongs done to the Christians. He not only embraced Christianity himself but even made it the state religion. From that time onward the religion as preached by Christ made rapid progress. But while Christianity was making rapid progress, the Empire of Rome was on the way to a steady decline. In the beginning of the 5th century a great movement of nations, known as the barbarians, started across the frontiers. Some of them settled in the frontiers. Others who lived beyond the frontiers were pushed out by new arrivals. This resulted in a big movement of people. The Roman Empire was seriously affected when armed hordes of the barbarians—the Goths, the Vandals and the Huns—began to pour in from all sides in almost endless streams. The Roman armies were unable to control them. Eventually the ‘Eternal City’, as Rome was called by her people and government, fell before the attacking barbarians (476 A.D.). The fall of Rome was the signal for the downfall of the Empire of Rome.

EXERCISES

1. (a) Who founded Rome and gave it its name?
(b) Why was monarchy overthrown in Rome?
2. In what way geography helped Rome to grow?
3. (a) Where was Carthage? What is it noted for?
(b) How many wars did Rome fight with Carthage?
(c) When was the war with Carthage finally ended?
4. What do you know of (a) the Patricians, (b) the Plebeians,
(c) the slaves and (d) the city rabble in Rome?
5. Who was Spartacus? Why is he remembered even today?
6. (i) (a) How did Julius Caesar come into power? (b) How long did he hold it? (c) How was he overthrown?
(ii) What were Caesar's services to Rome?
7. (a) Who was Constantine? How did he treat the Christians?
(b) How was the fall of Rome effected?

CHAPTER VIII

CHINA IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

China was a vast and a picturesque country. Its history, as told in legends, goes back to 5000 years before the birth of Christ. In an earlier chapter we have been told how the foundations of the old Chinese civilisation were laid along the valley of the Hwang-Ho and the Yangste-Kiang. By 3000 B.C. those who had earlier settled as agriculturists became familiar with the art of pottery and other arts and crafts of considerable quality. A little later they learnt the use of metals and thus made striking progress towards civilised life.

1. Politically China, like many other ancient countries, was divided into a number of little kingdoms and small city-states. Gradually, however, attempts were made to bring as many of them, as possible, together under one big kingdom. This was by no means an easy task. The country was too vast for the purpose. Naturally it took a long time before this could be fairly accomplished. The first historic dynasty to have nearly effected this union of North Central China was the great Shang Dynasty. It came into power about 1520 B.C. The capital of the Shang Kingdom was Anyang. It was situated a few miles from the river in the present province of Honan. A large number of ancient relics have been dug up from there. These consist of royal burial sites, palaces, temples, bronze urns and vases of excellent quality. Seals with writings on them have also been discovered in large numbers. These were mostly written on animal bones.

The people of that period lived in mud-houses. They were familiar with the art of weaving, besides pottery. They grew crops of wheat and millet, and domesticated animals like cattle, pigs and sheep. They seemed to have learnt the use of chariots and carts from West Asian countries. The Shang society was dominated by the well-born and wealthy sections of the people. They alone possessed family names, the rest of the people, the commoners, were yet to use individual names.

The Shang rule lasted till 1027 B.C. Their successors were the rulers of the Chou dynasty (1027-256 B.C.) with the longest years of rule to their credit. The capital of the Chou Kingdom was Hsian. It was located on the Wei, a western tributary of the Yellow River. Its authority spread over most of north China.

The Chou rulers replaced old cowrie shells by brass coins. They improved the means of irrigation and were able to produce more grains than they needed. They regularly sent out the surplus food crops to the neighbouring nomadic tribes, the Turks and the Mongolians. They also knew the use of ox-driven ploughs and other iron-made tools and articles.

2. The period of Chou rule saw the advent of one of the greatest thinkers of ancient China. He was King Futze (Kung the Sage) or better known as Confucius. He was born in about 551 B.C. in the state of Lu situated in the modern province of Shantung. He lost his father at the early age of three years. In his youth he travelled widely and gained the experience of the life and living of the average Chinese of his time. Later in life he held for some time the office of the Governor of his native state, Lu. He also served for some time as a judge. But he had no liking for an

official job. He took to wandering from place to place. At the ripe old age of 68 he came back to his native state and settled down quietly in a valley. He collected all the old writings in poetry, history and music. He regarded the good old days dating back to a period of 1500 years earlier as the golden age. He disliked the prevailing evils of feudal government which was a by-word for oppression and inequality. He recalled



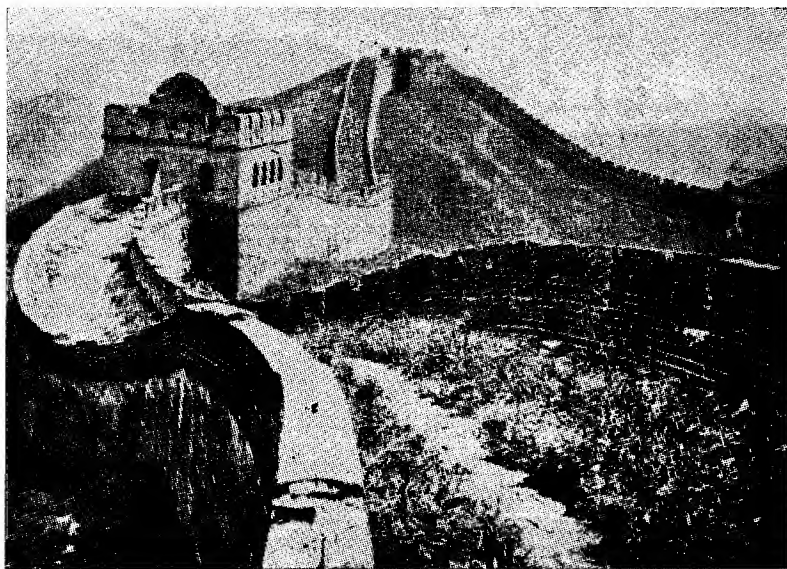
Confucius.

to his disciples small anecdotes which helped them to draw the line between good and evil. He did not preach any new religion. He preferred to appeal to the good sense of the people and taught them to lead moral and simple lives. "Right conduct," he said, "was the way to happiness." He tried to impress on his pupils the need of observing the old virtues which the ancient sages of China used to praise. He set the highest value to the need of observing honesty, truthfulness, simplicity and obedience to authority and ancient

customs. He did not speculate about God. To him morality was religion. "Do not do to others what you do not wish them to do to you"—summed up his main teaching to his fellow-men.

The great and wise sage passed away in 478 B.C.

The Chou rule was overthrown in about 221 B.C. when the Chin dynasty took over. The new rulers fought the evils of feudal divisions and gave to China an administrative unity such as it had never known before. The first ruler of this new line to have set up what is known as the Chinese Empire was Shih Huang Ti. He was the first Emperor of China. He shifted his capital to Hsien-Yang and made it the headquarter of a centralised administration. He enforced uniform weights and measures, imposed new taxes to increase imperial revenue and gave his subjects the benefit of



The Great Wall of China.

uniform laws. He dazzled his people by constructing an imposing palace whose roofs covered a total area of 30 acres. He is, however, chiefly remembered as the maker of the historic Great Wall of China. It was intended to ensure security against attacks by the nomads and the barbarians. It was a huge and massive structure along the northern frontier of China. It passed through high mountains and deep valleys covering a stretch of 1500 miles. Its height ranged from fifteen to thirty feet. In its magnitude it dwarfs the Pyramids. According to one estimate it needed half a million workers to complete its construction. Though more than 2000 years old, it is in a state of admirable preservation.

The Chin rule, however, did not last beyond a few years after the death of China's first Emperor. The Hans succeeded the Chins in about 202 B.C.

EXERCISES

1. Who was Confucius? What were his main teachings?
2. (a) Who built the Great Wall of China? Give a short description of the Wall.
- (b) Here is a list of 4 dynasties that ruled in China. Put them in proper order of succession: the Chou, the Chin, the Han and the Shang.

CHAPTER IX

ANCIENT INDIA

Until some half a century ago it was generally believed that civilisation in India started with the coming of the Aryans. The discoveries of Mohenjodaro and Harappa have now proved that the story is older than the Aryans in India. As seen earlier, Indian civilisation dates back to at least two thousand years before the arrival of the Aryans. The Indus Valley civilisation is generally regarded as pre-Aryan. This does not lessen the importance of the Aryan share in the making of Indian civilisation. The civilisation of India of today is largely a product of Aryan influence.

1. The original home of the Aryans is not known. They were a people probably from somewhere in Central Europe or the Pamir or on the Black Sea coast. Then as their numbers increased groups of Aryans migrated to several countries in Europe and Asia. One of these groups settled in Pamir, while another moved on to India. The latter are known as the Indo-Aryans. It is generally supposed that they came to India in the early part of the second millennium B.C.

2. The Aryans were a highly gifted and civilised people. Their earliest known work is the Vedas, the oldest extant literature of the Aryan-speaking people. It is a huge mass of sacred writing, composed over a period of many years. They give us good idea about the life of the Aryans in India.

At the beginning the Aryans were divided into a

number of tribes. These tribes were composed of a number of families. The family was thus the basis of the Aryan society. As a matter of rule the father was looked upon as the head of the family. His authority was absolute. The main occupation of the Aryans was agriculture. The bulk of the people lived in villages. Their mode of living was simple and cheerful. The main items of their food were rice, wheat, vegetables and fruits. They drank milk and occasionally wine too. They used cotton and woollen garments and clothings. In war they used javelins, swords, bows and arrows. War-chariots are also known to have been in use. The Aryans were fond of music and dancing. Their hymns mention musical instruments such as the flute, the lute and the drum. Gambling too was in vogue. Women were held in great respect. Some of them like Ghosha and Apala are even known to have composed some of the Vedic hymns.

The division between the white-skinned Aryans and the dark-skinned non-Aryans was based on *varna*, or colour of skin. Gradually there grew the system of *varnas* or four-fold caste-division—the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras. The Brahmins taught the *Sashtras*, performed worship and religious rites. The Kshatriyas formed the ruling and warrior class. The Vaishyas were traders and agriculturists, while the Sudras served the three higher castes. At the beginning the caste-divisions were not rigid. There are instances when a Kshatriya could be upgraded as a Brahmin.

An average Aryan, belonging to the three higher castes was required to pass through four *Ashrams* or stages in his life-time. In the first stage, known as *Brahmacharya*, an Aryan boy spent his days in his

preceptor's house, engaged in the pursuit of knowledge under a strict code of discipline. The next stage, *Garhastya*, would permit a youth to marry and enjoy family life. The third state was known as *Vanaprastha* which prescribed a life of retirement. In the fourth and last stage, the *Sannyas*, it was obligatory for an elderly man to completely withdraw from the family and live in meditation.

Like many other ancient people, the Aryans worshipped powerful objects of nature: the sun, the air, and the clouds as divinities. But they also realised that these objects were but the manifestations of one, indivisible supreme power.

As told earlier, the Aryan settlers in India lived in tribes or clans. Each tribe or clan had its own chief. There were rivalries among the tribes. Gradually when one tribal chief won over other tribes, his power and prestige grew, so that he took the title of *Rajan* or King. He was helped by a number of officers, chief among them were the priest, the commander of troops and an officer known as the *Gramani*. Two other bodies acted as a check on the king's power. These were known as the *Sabha* and the *Samiti*. The former was composed of the leading men in the kingdom while the latter consisted of the representatives of the people.

Kings were at first elected, then the office became hereditary. When a particular king became powerful enough to extend his authority over other kings he took the title of *Samrat*, *Ekarat* and *Rajachakrabarti*. The most successful among them used to hold sacrifices like *Rajasuya* or *Asvamedha* as tokens of their sovereign position.

3. The national epics of India are the *Ramayana*

and the *Mahabharata*. They deal with the period starting from the later years of the Vedic age. They refer to several episodes which may be found in the earlier Vedic literature. Hence it may be supposed that the age described in the two epics is but a continuation of the later Vedic period. We do not know for certain the dates when these two epics were first composed.

Traditionally the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are supposed to be the work of the poet Valmiki and the sage Vedavyasa respectively. The episodes narrated in the epics were at first recited to the accompaniment of music in the same manner as the Homeric poems were sung in the Epic or Heroic age of ancient Greece. Later they were written down. Even then they underwent changes from time to time. The form in which they have reached our times is probably not earlier than the fourth or the fifth century A.D.

The *Ramayana* in all probability was composed earlier. It recalls the life and work of Ramachandra, the son of king Dasaratha of Ajodhya (Avadh—Oudh of later days). Its main theme is the adventures of the young prince who, while in exile, came into conflict with the demon-king of Sri Lanka. The *Mahabharata*, on the other hand, gives an account of a great war fought on the field of Kurukshetra between the Kurus and the Pandavas. It was a contest for supremacy in Aryavartta. Many of the episodes and the personalities described in the two epics are imaginary. But even then, like the Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the Indian epics are valuable aids to history. They provide us with glimpses into the life and society of ancient times in India. They are also important since they are our national epics.

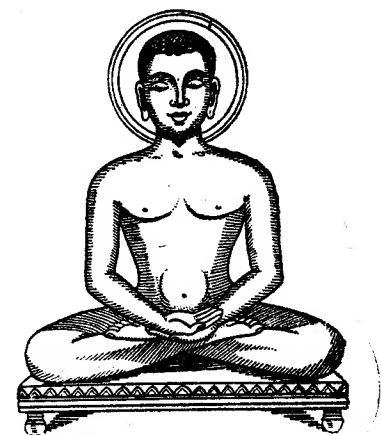
The episodes described in them are recalled in songs, dramas and music throughout the country even to this day. They are thus a powerful bond of national unity.

The religion preached in the Vedas and the Puranas was for many centuries the only religion in India. In course of time rites and rituals became very elaborate. The common people were unable to follow the true meaning of the religious books written in Sanskrit, they learnt to rely more and more on the priestly class, who explained the *Sashtras* in their own way, often differing from the others in their interpretation. The people felt confused at times. There was also a growing discontent against caste distinctions which tended to become more and more rigid. It was in the midst of this unrest that two great religious teachers arose. They were *Mahavira Vardhamana* and *Gautama Buddha*. Both belonged to the Kshatriya clans of Eastern India.

4. We are traditionally accustomed to think of Mahavira and Jainism together. He was not, however, the founder of the religion. According to Jain texts there were twenty-three Jain teachers before him. But he was the first to organise it as a great system of religion.

According to Jain texts Mahavira was born of Kshatriya parents at the village of Kunda near Vaisali in Bihar, some time about 599 B.C. His father, Siddhartha, was a man of wealth and rank. Naturally his boyhood was spent in comfort. But even as a boy Vardhamana (this was his original name) did not feel happy. He felt worried about the miseries of disease, old age and death. His parents wanted to keep him cheerful. They married him to a beautiful girl named

Yasoda. A daughter was born to them but worldly pleasures failed to make him happy. One day he left home and went on wandering and doing hard penance. After twelve years he found what he had searched for. He had conquered all desires. So he came to be known as *Mahavira* or the great conqueror. His other epithet was *Nirgrantha* or 'one without bonds'.



Mahavira.

Mahavira spent the rest of his life preaching his gospel. He taught the cult of non-violence or non-injury. He believed that all things, not only men, beasts and birds, but also plants, even earth and water had souls. Therefore it was necessary that one should avoid doing injury to them. He realised that the source of human misery was desire. It was necessary that men should learn to get rid of desire in any form. His predecessor, Parsvanath, had already taught his followers not to steal, not to speak lies and not to be tempted by worldly things. To these Mahavira added the need of practising strict *brahmacharya*.

Mahavira did not support caste distinctions nor was he a believer in the wisdom of rituals. He did not talk about God either. He died, aged 72, at Pavapuri in Bihar on Deepavali day about 527 B.C.

Gautama Buddha, originally known as Siddhartha, was a younger contemporary of Mahavira. He was born about 566 B.C. at Lumbinigama in Kapilavastu, the capital of the Sakyas. His father Suddhodana was

one of the leaders of the republic of Kapilavastu. Soon after his birth Siddhartha lost his mother



Gautama Buddha : Gandhara Style.

and was brought up by his aunt Prajapati Gotami. As a boy he grew to be pensive. He was depressed by the suffering of men he saw all around him. His parents got him married. He was blessed with a son. But worldly pleasures did not change him. His desire to relieve men of their sufferings grew to be a passion with him. It was so compelling that one night, unseen by others, he left the palace. He went on wandering from place to place. He spent many months reading the Sashtras. But this failed to satisfy him. At length he started penance. He was resolved that either his body would perish or he would find the means to conquer miseries. His devotion was at last rewarded. While engaged in days of meditation under a bodhi-tree at Uruvilva, near Gaya, enlightenment or supreme knowledge dawned on him. Henceforth he came to be known as the *Buddha* or the *Enlightened One*.

The Buddha preached his first sermons at the deer-park of Sarnath, near Benaras. He spent the remaining years of his life, carrying his message to people of all ranks, princes, commoners, rich and poor, high and low.

He spoke in a simple language which every one could understand. After incessant preaching for thirty-five years, he died at the age of 80 at Kusinagar (modern Kasia), in the district of Gorakhpur, U. P.

The teachings of the Buddha were simple and practical. He taught that the root of our sufferings lay in desire. Once this desire was killed, there could be no sorrow or suffering. To end desire it was necessary to observe a code of conduct. "This," he said, "consisted in right thinking, right speech and right actions." He asked his followers to give up greed, to abstain from injury to others, to practise truth and, above all, non-violence. He favoured the middle course by avoiding both extreme penance and excessive comfort.

Buddhism spread even beyond India and became a world religion. Jainism was confined to India. But it is striking that while Buddhism died out in the land of its origin, the religion as preached by Mahavira survives in India to this day.

5. The story of Indian culture and civilisation goes back to more than 5000 years ago. But not so her political history in a connected form. We no doubt get glimpses into the political life in the Vedic and epic ages. But it is not possible to get a connected narrative political history of India. At one time it was believed that a connected, dated history began only with the days when Alexander was on the Indian soil. This view is, however, no longer held. It is now possible to start the story from the 6th century B.C.

We learn from Jain and Buddhist literary works that in the early years of the 6th century B.C. India was divided into sixteen *Mahajanapadas*. Each of these

was an independent unit. But some of these units wanted to out-rival others in a bid for power. Thus there began a political struggle in which four states took leading part. These were Kasi, Kosala, Avanti and Magadh. In the long run Magadh out-distanced the other powers and established its supremacy.

The founder of the Magadhan supremacy was Bimbisara. He was a contemporary and a disciple of Gautama Buddha. He annexed Anga, befriended the Lichhavis of Vaisali and established cordial relations with the rulers of Madra in Punjab, Videha, Kosala and even distant Taxila. His capital was Girivraja. His successors, Ajatasatru and Udayin, brought for Magadh more territories and prestige. The latter removed his capital to Pataliputra, situated at the site where the Ganga meets the Son. It grew to be a historic city and remained for many centuries the centre of political gravity in India.

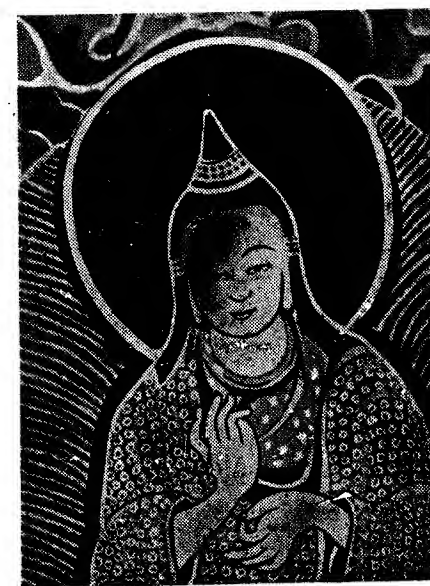
On the fall of the line set up by Bimbisara, Pataliputra and its empire passed into the possession of Sisunaga. He proved to be an able and vigorous ruler. He extended his rule as far east as Varanasi. The last in the line of Sisunaga was Kalasoka. He was weak and oppressive. One of his officers, Mahapadma drove him out and seized the throne. He was the founder of the famous dynasty of the Nandas. Mahapadma brought nearly the whole of Northern India, besides Kalinga under his authority. In contemporary literature he is described as the first historical emperor of Aryavartta.

On the fall of the Nandas a new dynasty came into power in Magadh. Its founder was Chandragupta. The dynasty founded by him is known as the Maurya dynasty. He belonged to the Kshatriya family of

Pippalivana. His own abilities combined with the resourcefulness of his Brahman adviser, Chanakya, enabled him to build an empire which extended as far as the borders of Persia in the north-east, Saurashtra in the west, Bengal in the east and the river Nellore in the south. He met the attack of Seleucos, the king of Syria, who made an attempt to recover Alexander's dominions in India. He compelled the Syrian king to withdraw after signing a disadvantageous treaty. To him belongs the credit of freeing India from the yoke of the Greeks. According to the Greek historians, Chandragupta had an army 600,000 strong with which he had overrun the whole country.

His son Bindusara maintained the empire in tact. It is possible that he even added to it some new territories situated in the Deccan. The Greek writers describe him as "the great killer of his enemies".

By far the greatest among the Maurya Emperors, and in fact, among the rulers known to ancient history was Asoka, the son and successor of Bindusara. Like his father and grandfather, Asoka gave his first attention to conquests. He made war on Kalinga and won it after an unprecedented blood bath. Many thousands



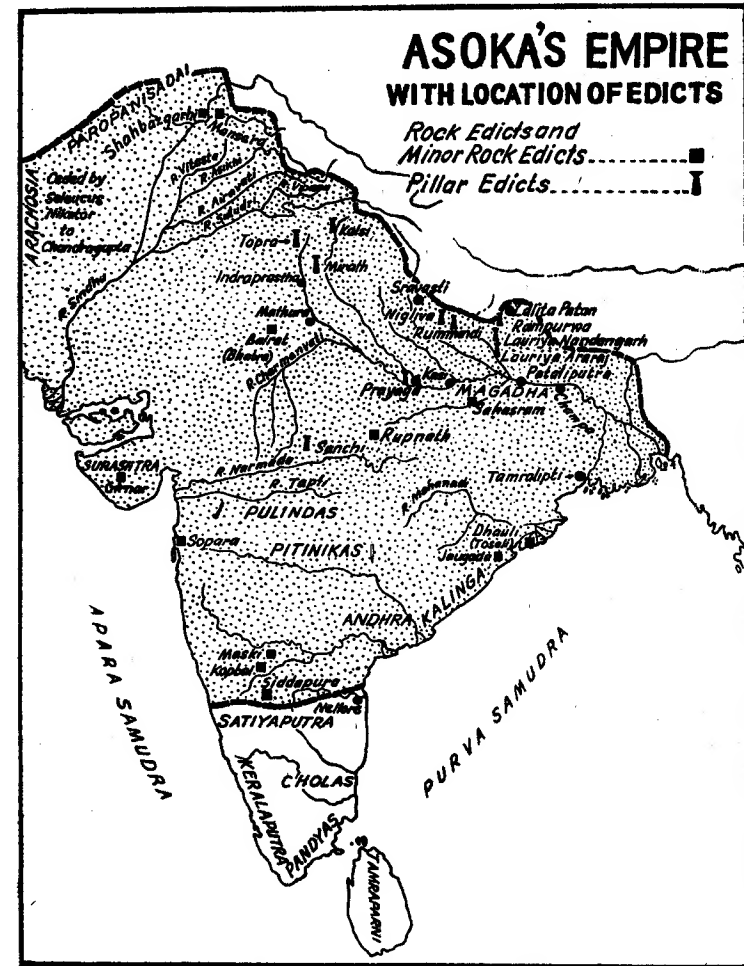
Asoka.

were killed, many more were taken prisoners. But in the midst of his victory, Asoka felt sick of the horrors of war. He made up his mind not to shed blood any more. He wanted that his sons and successors should not take recourse to war or acts of violence. He himself embraced Buddhism and made it his mission in life to preach the gospel of peace, tolerance and non-injury in any form. He kept his word. Under him the gospel of the Buddha spread over wide areas in Asia, Africa and Europe. In fact Asoka made Buddhism a world religion.

Within less than half a century of Asoka's death, the vast empire he had built up went to pieces. Large numbers of foreign hordes, the Greeks, the Parthians, the Sakas and the Yue-chis poured into India along the north-western passes. No one could contain them. Gradually they parcelled out a number of areas in the north-west and the northern parts of India among themselves. The utmost gain was made by the Kushans. They were a branch of the Yue-chis of central Asia. Under their first leader, Kadphises I they occupied Gandhara and Southern Afghanistan. His successor, Kadphises II, added Punjab and portions of modern Uttar Pradesh. His successor, Kaniska, was the greatest among the Kushan rulers. He was a great warrior. He conquered vast areas. These included Kashmir, Rajputana, Malwa, Ajodhya, Kathiawar and Magadh. He is also said to have conquered Khotan, Kashgar and Yarkhand in central Asia. Kaniska's empire thus extended from central Asia to the Gangetic valley. His capital was at Purushapura, 'modern Peshawar'.

Kaniska was not a warrior only. He was also a great patron of arts, culture and religion. His court was adorned by a number of distinguished scholars

and men of letters, like Asva-ghosa, Nagarjuna, Vasumitra and Susruta. Under him the Gandhara



Maurya Empire.

school of art flourished. It produced many splendid works of art modelled on what is known as the Indo-Greek style. A devotee of Buddha, Kaniska summoned a council of Buddhist monks in his capital and adorned

the same with a splendid tower. He was, however, liberal enough to show respect to the Hindu god Shiva and is known to have worshipped fire after the manner of the followers of Zoroaster.

The last great Kushan ruler was Vasudeva. After his death Kushan power began to fall rapidly. By the first decade of the 4th century A.D. Magadh recovered its position under the house of the Imperial Guptas. Its founder was Chandragupta I. He ruled over an area which included Magadh, Allahabad and Ajodhya. He strengthened his position by marrying a princess of the Lichhavi family of Vaisali. The greatest among the Gupta monarchs was his son, Samudragupta. He was the greatest warrior king of ancient India. His conquests are described in the Pillar inscription



Samudragupta.

to be found in the Allahabad Fort. It gives a list of various kings of Northern India who suffered defeat and were compelled to lose their kingdoms to his empire. Samudragupta also defeated a number of princes in various parts of the Deccan. He, however, received their submission but gave them back their territories. Many other

tribal peoples and local rulers submitted to his authority on their own accord. His fame also spread over the islands of the Indian Ocean like Sri Lanka and Sumatra.

6. The empire of the Guptas reached still greater limits under the next ruler, Chandragupta II. He defeated the Sakas, wrested Ujjain and extended his authority as far west as the Arabian Sea. The empire

remained in tact under Kumaragupta and Skandagupta. It, however, began to show sign of decline after the latter's death. By the middle of the 6th century A.D. the Empire of the Guptas was a mere shadow of what it had been in earlier days.

BENGAL

7. The area until recently (i.e. before the partition of 1947), known as Bengal was a pre-historic site. Many relics of the stone and metal ages have been discovered in several sites of Bengal. The area and its people and princes are also mentioned in Vedic literature and in the two epics. But it is also evident that for a long time Bengal did not come under the influence of the Aryan culture which had become predominant in Aryavartta or northern India. The language spoken by the people and the social manners and customs were strikingly different from those of upper India. In the early Buddhist literature, the language spoken by the people in some of the areas later comprised in Bengal has been described as the 'language of the Ashuras'. In some old Jain texts the people of the areas now forming parts of West Bengal were described as a rude and inhospitable people who were unkind to Mahavira while he was on his wanderings. All these probably show that for a long time Eastern India maintained its own pattern of life and culture and did not come under the influence of the Aryan-dominated north.

But Bengal, or as a matter of fact, Eastern India could not retain her isolation for long. At the time when Alexander was in India, there existed two strong kingdoms in Eastern India. The Greek writers give these kingdoms the names of Prasii and Gangaridii.

These were two neighbourly states, each possessing a strong and powerful army consisting of infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariots. According to at least one Greek writer Alexander failed to induce his troops to advance beyond the Beas as they were unwilling to risk a trial of strength with the powerful army of the East.

When the Mauryas set up their power in Magadh, Bengal or several parts of it came under the power of the Mauryas. Pundravardhan (in Northern Bengal), Tamralipti or Tamluk and Samatata (Central Bengal) were parts of the Maurya Empire. An old Brahmi inscription found at Mahasthan speaks of the enormous wealth and agricultural resources of Bengal.

Not much is known of Bengal in the days when the Maurya empire was on the decline. But even then Gangaridii finds mention in Greek accounts. Its capital Gange was a flourishing trade-centre.

Northern India, including Bengal, was not united until the forces of unity and strength revived under the Guptas. As we have read earlier, both Samudragupta and his son Chandragupta II Vikramaditya were mighty warrior-kings. They made wide conquests. Among them were large portions of Bengal. Pundravardhana was a province of the Gupta empire.

After the Gupta rule began to decline, Bengal, like other provinces, began to fall away. It seems, however, that in the years after the end of the Gupta rule there grew up a powerful kingdom in Bengal. Three of its rulers, Gopachandra, Dharmaditya and Samachardeva are mentioned in contemporary and later literature as powerful and accomplished princes. Some gold coins and copper plate inscriptions of the period of

their reign have been discovered. It was not till the beginning of the 7th century A.D. that Bengal found in Sasanka a leader of outstanding merit who made bold efforts to make his authority felt not only over Bengal but in lands beyond it.

8. India is skirted by the mountains on the north. On the east, west and the south the seas guard her. This may lead one to suppose that in the good old days when means of communication were yet to develop, India lived in isolation. To suppose so, would, however, be a historical error. Neither the seas nor the mountains acted as barriers to contact between India and the world outside. The ancient Indians are known to have defied the seas and set up colonies and centres of trade in the islands of south-east Asia. Similarly they made use of the mountain passes along the north-western frontiers to communicate with people living in the areas north of India. In particular, India's contact with central Asia grew to be very close. This was partly because a large number of central Asian peoples are known to have come to India and settled here. The Sakas and the Kushans came from these regions. The Indians also went out there and established their settlements. Thus Indian culture spread over wide areas in Central Asia. This is proved by excavations carried out by Sir Aurel Stein in Khotan.

A large number of relics of Indian origin, like ruins of Buddhist monasteries, images of Hindu deities and manuscripts written in Indian languages have come to light. In Chinese Turkestan many traces of cave dwellings of Buddhist monks have been discovered. Other areas in central Asia which bear traces of Indian cultural influence are Kuchi, Turfan, Akon and Kashgarh.

Of all the countries in Central Asia, Tibet came under the greatest influence of Indian culture. This was due to the spread of Buddhism in this region. A number of Indian scholars and religious leaders went to Tibet with the mission of spreading the gospel of the Buddha. The most prominent among the earlier teachers were Santarakshita, Padmasambhava and Kamalsila. But by far the most well-known among the Buddhist scholar-visitors in Tibet was Dipankara Srijnana Atisa. He was invited by the king of Tibet to visit his kingdom. Atisa was then an old man of seventy. The journey was difficult. Even then Atisa braved all perils and reached the land of the snows. He spent the rest of his life there spreading the teachings of the Buddha among the people of Tibet. His mission was a great success. Many lamas of Tibet learnt Sanskrit and caused several Sanskrit texts to be rendered into Tibetan.

Contact with lands and peoples beyond India was an event of great significance. Its effect was not limited to the cultural field alone. It facilitated trade to the advantage of both India and the countries abroad. Trade operated through overland routes connecting India with central Asian countries, while exchange in commerce between India and the south-east Asian countries was carried on with the aid of voyages across the seas. A large number of Asian people settled in India were largely absorbed within Indian society.

9. Interesting glimpses into the life and conditions in ancient India have been provided by foreign travellers. The most well-known among the Greek writers on India is *Megasthenes*. He came to the court of Chandragupta Maurya as an envoy of the king of Syria. He resided at Pataliputra for several years. He

has left for us important accounts of what he had seen and heard. But his book has not come down to us in full. It is a collection of his writings as quoted by later Greek writers to whom his full account was available. His book *The Fragments of Indica* is a valuable source for India of the 4th century B.C.

Megasthenes writes that the Indians were divided into seven castes like philosophers, husbandmen, etc. What he meant was that the Indians were divided into seven occupational groups. Among them the largest were the tillers of the soil. Their wants, writes Megasthenes, were little since the land was fertile, crops grew in plenty and famines were unknown. Trade and industry too flourished.

Megasthenes is full of praise for the Indians who were truthful and honest. They trusted one another and needed no witnesses while entering into agreements on loan or sale. They lived frugally and kept their houses unguarded. Instances of theft and robbery were rare but penal laws were severe. Serious offences brought on capital sentences.

Economically the people were solvent. In spite of their simple habits both men and women used valuable jewelleries. In one place Megasthenes writes that the Indians did not know the art of writing, but elsewhere he says that milestones with figures on them were posted for the benefit of the travelling public. Women were held in respect though their position was not as high as that in the Vedic and Epic ages. Men could marry more than once. In some localities widows used to enter the funeral pyre of their husbands. Megasthenes informs us that slavery was unknown in India. What he perhaps meant is that slavery, as practised in Greece, was not known in India.

Another well-known foreign writer on ancient India was the Chinese pilgrim, *Fa-Hein*. He spent nine years in India when Chandragupta II Vikramaditya was on the throne of Magadh. Unlike Megasthenes, Fa-Hein was for most of the time engaged in wandering from place to place, visiting, in particular, the holy cities of Buddhism. He speaks well of the administration. Law and order were maintained well. Travelling was free and safe. As he writes, "Those who want to go, may go; those who want to stop, may stop". People felt so safe and secure that they could go to sleep in their houses without locking their doors from inside.

Fa-Hein was impressed by the beauty and splendour of the Maurya palace at Pataliputra. He thought that the skill of the Indian craftsmen was beyond the skill of mortal hands. He saw a great stupa and two monasteries in the royal city. He also mentioned the existence of excellent free hospitals and charitable institutions maintained by public donations.

The people in northern and central India generally followed the Buddhist way of life. He wrote: "Throughout the country no one kills any living thing, or drinks wine or eats onion or garlic." People lived simple and frugal lives. The penal laws were milder than those of the Maurya times. The Brahmans occupied the highest rank in the society. The Chandals were treated as untouchables and compelled to live in the outskirts of the towns. Women belonging to noble and well-to-do families were encouraged to seek higher education.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. There was also a considerable volume of trade. The sea-ports on the eastern and western coasts were busy

centres of trade. Tamralipta (modern Tamluk) was well-known as a port of trade. Large vessels used to cull at and sail out of this port, laden with cargo and passengers. The standard of living was much above the average. The rich spent large portion of their wealth in charities.

10. Looking back at the period covered so far, it is evident that the ancient Indians attained a high level of culture in all its branches. The Mauryas gave India political and cultural unity. Even during the period of foreign rule the stream of Indian culture did not dry up. In fact Sanskrit language and literature continued to flourish. It reached the high water mark of its progress under the Imperial Guptas. The palace of the Mauryas at Pataliputra, the stupas and capitals erected by Asoka, the tower built by Kaniska at Peshawar have excited the wonder and admiration of all who had seen them. The specimens of sculpture of Kushan and Gupta ages that have survived are hailed even today as works of exquisite art. Paintings of the Ajanta caves are evidences of the excellent skill attained by the Indian artists. Literature reached its golden age under the Guptas. Kalidasa who was a contemporary of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya was one of the greatest poets and dramatists of all ages. His works, *Meghaduta*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumarsambhava* and *Abhijnana-Sakuntalam* are acclaimed as the best specimens of literature written in any language. Among other men of letters of the Gupta age Sudraka, Visakhadatta, Amarsingha deserve mention. Science, specially mathematics and astronomy, made wonderful progress. Among the great scientists the most outstanding names are those of Aryabhatta, Varahamihira and Brahmagupta. Metallurgy also made consider-

able progress. The Iron Pillar at Mehrauli in Delhi, erected in Gupta days, remains to this day as polished as ever. Chemistry and medicine were also cultivated with great success, in the great centres of



Ajanta Cave Painting.

learning. Among these centres the most prominent were Taxila and Nalanda. The former specialised in the study of medicine. Scientific treatises in medicine of an extraordinarily high standard were written by Charaka and Susruta. The university of Nalanda was a general seat of higher learning. It had earned international reputation. Students from various countries of Asia, besides from all over India, came here in pursuit of different branches of knowledge. It was a residential centre in which teachers and students lived

in closest fellowship. It was maintained by successive rulers of Eastern India.

EXERCISES

- When do you get the first glimpses of civilisation in India?
- (a) What do you know of the Aryans before their arrival in India?
(b) What are the Vedas? What light do they throw on the life of the Aryans?
- (i) What are the main teachings of Jainism?
(ii) Give an account of the early life of Gautama before his 'Enlightenment'.
- (a) What do you mean by Gramani, Sabha, Samiti, Rajan, Samrat, Nirgranthas and Nirvana?
(b) Name the four Varnas and the four Ashrams.
- To what and whom do the following statements apply?
(i) They are the oldest extant literature of the Aryan speaking people.
(ii) They are the national epics of India.
(iii) He preached his first sermons at the deer-park of Sarnath.
(iv) In contemporary literature he is described as the first historical emperor of Aryavartta.
(v) To him belongs the credit of freeing India from the yoke of the Greeks.
(vi) He made Buddhism a world religion.
(vii) His court was adorned by eminent scholars like Asvaghosha, Nagarjuna and Vasumitra.
(viii) He was the greatest warrior-king of ancient India.
- (a) Below are given the names of important rulers of ancient India. Are the names in chronological order? If not, arrange them properly.
Chandragupta I, Kaniska, Bindusara, Bimbisara and Samudragupta.
(b) Here is a list of rulers or dynasties and capitals. They are mixed up. Sort them out in proper pairs.
(i) Bimbisara and Purushapura.
(ii) Chandragupta Maurya and Girivraja.